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SERMONS

BY

JOHN CONYBEARE, D.D.

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LORD BISHOP of BRISTOL,



Dean of Christ-Church, Oxon.

VOL. I.

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SERMONS

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time by the Honours which Your
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him ; and, since his Decease, by
Your

Your Royal Munificence to his surviving Family ; whose hereditary Loyalty and Affection to Your Sacred Person, and thankful Sense of Your Bounty, are too great to be expressed in other Words, than those of the most fervent Prayers, by

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S E R M O N I.

Christian Salvation the Matter of Joy
and Praise to Angels.

On CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE .ii. 14.

*Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth
Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

THE Words before us contain that Hymn, with which the Angels celebrated the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour; who, tho' born of mean Parents, and under Circumstances of human Distress, was yet introduced with singular Solemnity,—those excellent Judges of real Dignity proclaiming his Appearance with Songs of holy Praise and Joy.

VOL. I.

B

To

To us therefore, who are now met on this anniversary Festival to commemorate that great Occurrence, what more proper Subject of Meditation than the Hymn, with which it was first celebrated? For certainly the Devotion of Angels must supply fit Matter for the Study and Contemplation of Christians.

The Words are, *Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* These being once explained, I shall, in the Progress of my Discourse, enlarge on such Particulars as are plainly contained in them, or by just Inference may be deduced from them.

In order to attain the full Meaning of the Words, Regard must be had to the Passages which go before, and the Occasion upon which they were delivered; for these frequently impress a Sense, which the Words, tho' themselves capable of it, yet, considered apart, may not necessarily require to be given.

To this Purpose we should observe, that when the Angel appeared to the Shepherds, he accosted them in this Manner, ver. 10, 11. *Behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People:—For unto you*

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you is born this Day, in the City of David, a SAVIOUR which is Christ the Lord. And then it follows in the 13th Verse; *And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, &c.* The Birth of Christ, or, which amounts to the same, the Proclamation of his Birth, was the Occasion of this devotional Hymn; for immediately upon this Proclamation, a Multitude of the heavenly Host praised God in the solemn Form which we are now considering.

But, what should move them to such extraordinary Joy? Was it merely the Birth of Christ? Was it, that the Second Person in the *divine* Nature condescended so far as to assume the *human*? This of itself might raise their Wonder, as being an Event which, without a farther View, they must be unable to account for; but such a Wonder seems to have given them juster Occasion for Self-abasement, than Praise and Exultation.

Yet, if we look back and consider what the Angel declared to the Shepherds, *Unto you is born this Day, in the City of David, a SAVIOUR*; if we consider, that this was the first Thing visibly executed upon Earth towards reconciling Mankind to God, and

the doing that, upon which the Salvation of the World must originally depend,—we shall see new Light breaking in upon us, and such as will discover the Propriety of the Angels Joy, and the true Force and Meaning of the Words before us.

For, upon this Foot, that benevolent Disposition with which we must conceive these unfallen Angels endued, could not but make them rejoyce in the Prospect of Man's Salvation, proportionably as the Evil Being was intent on his Destruction : They could not but take a singular Pleasure in viewing, tho' at a Distance, an increasing Number of Fellow-Servants of the true God drawn out of those who had been seduced from his Service by the malicious Artifice of Satan. And as all this was to be gradually accomplished by a Variety of Means hereafter to be used by Christ in the Discharge of his high Offices ;—as these Means were as fully expressive of infinite Wisdom, as the End itself was of infinite Goodness ; — as the whole Scheme carried with it an Illustration of the noblest Divine Attributes ; — here was most ample Ground of Praise. And therefore, very fitly did the heavenly Host call upon the whole Angelick Order, saying, *Glory to God in the highest,*

S E R M O N I. 5

highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.

These Words, *in the highest*, are not here to be referred to God, as signifying God who dwelleth in the Heavens; but should rather be understood of those Ministers of his Will, who constantly attend him there; and so this first Clause calls upon the whole heavenly Host to adore and praise God — It follows, *Peace on Earth*. This expresses the Matter, as well as Ground and Reason of their Praise. By the Incarnation of Christ, and what was doing in Consequence of his Incarnation, *Earth, i. e.* Mankind, are reconciled; Peace is made between God and Man; and that Displeasure which Man's Sin occasioned, was now to be done away. — *Good-will towards Men*. This seems to be a farther Explication of what went before: For, the first Step towards Divine Favour is the Removal of Divine Displeasure: This being removed, and Peace procured, the Way is opened for every other following Grace; for spiritual Support and Assistance in this Life, and everlasting Happiness and Glory in the next.

Having thus far opened the Words, I shall pursue the Intent of them under the following Heads:

6 S E R M O N I.

I. The Incarnation of Christ being designed for the Salvation of Mankind, was a signal Instance of Divine Condescension and Favour.

II. The following Conduct and Administration of Christ did fully accomplish the great End designed by his Incarnation.

III. The proposing this End, and bringing it to Accomplishment by such extraordinary Means, was not only a Ground of the utmost Gratitude on Man's Part, but of Joy and Praise even in the Angels themselves; as being the brightest Manifestation of the Divine Attributes, and, consequently, in the properest Sense of the Expression, of the Divine Glory itself.

I. First then, The Incarnation of Christ, being designed for the Salvation of Mankind, was a signal Instance of Divine Condescension and Favour.

All Men have sinned. Even our first Parents continued but a short Time in a State of Innocence. They fell by the first Temptation; and, having corrupted their Nature, derived it down, with the same sinful Pollution, to their Posterity. Hence we bring with us into the World the first Seeds of Iniquity; which not being sufficiently checked in the Be-

S E R M O N I, 7

Beginning,—and perhaps encouraged by a Variety of Circumstances, to which human Life is subject, have grown and improved vastly, and brought forth a plentiful Harvest of actual Sin. The very *best* have fallen far short of Perfection in Moral Duty: The Careless have insensibly run themselves into Difficulties beyond the Mastery of their virtuous Principles: And the Profligate, having abandoned every thing good, have embraced all Opportunities of sinning with Greediness. Such was the State and Condition of the World when *Christ* came to save us!

In Consequence of this, Man, the highest, and once the most favoured Part of the visible Creation, could not be viewed by the Eye of Purity with Approbation. He was strictly *fallen from Grace*; *i. e.* from all Right and Title to Grace. His Actions, his Temper, his very Constitution, being, in many respects, wrong, he became not only disqualified for that Happiness to which he was originally designed, but the proper Object of that Misery which is the Consequence of Divine Displeasure.

Out of this wretched State no Power of his own could redeem him: For, if some-

thing might be done to prevent his growing worse, and running the utmost Lengths of Impiety, yet this does by no means amount to a proper Recovery from Sin : It might stop, in some measure, the Overflowing of Ungodliness, but could not remove the Cause. That lay deeply rooted in human Nature ; —and therefore could not be removed by human Skill or Care.

Or, if it should be said, that Repentance would cure all, —pray, what did this Repentance amount to ? Was it any more than a sorrowful Reflection on past Iniquity, incapable of being recalled ? —Perhaps you will say, More : Perhaps you will say, it implied a Resolution of future Amendment, and a new Course of perfect Obedience. But, were such excellent Resolutions ever made ? —or, if made, were they ever effectual ? Did not even their firmest Resolutions frequently fail them ? so that, in their best State, they seemed rather advancing slowly towards Perfection, than having already attained unto it.

And indeed, of this a good Reason may be given. For, they could not change their Nature. This was itself corrupt : As such, tho' capable of being controuled, in some measure,

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measure, by Care and Discipline, yet it could not be absolutely cured: It would break forth, and shew itself frequently; and by this means, abate much of the Excellency of those Services, which were well intended at first, and sincerely pursued afterwards. This Repentance therefore was, and could not but be, in a great Degree imperfect.

Beyond this, there is another Thing still behind. Let us suppose such a Repentance complete, and the Person repenting to have gained such a perfect Mastery of Sin, as to avoid it entirely for the future; yet, could this, of itself, make Amends for past Transgression? Repentance supposes something Wrong committed, which a Man reflects upon with Shame and Sorrow: But, doth this Shame, this Sorrow, or even the avoiding of Sin in future Time, undo what it supposes to have been done? or make a Man really innocent, who is really guilty? or destroy entirely the ill Effects of former Transgression? If it cannot do any of these, what Security can it give us of Pardon? and how can it, by its own mere Force, restore us to that Favour, which was forfeited by former Sin?

We

We see then, in such a Condition as this, three Things were necessary to be done, in order to Man's Relief.

1. A Reconciliation must be obtained between God and Man; *i. e.* Something must be done in order to avert that Displeasure which Sin had caused; and to procure us Acceptance with God, notwithstanding our past Transgressions.

2. Some new favourable Terms of Abatement must be procured: The original Law of Obedience, absolutely perfect, must be cancelled; and *the doing the best we can*, be admitted in lieu of the rigorous Discharge of Duty.

3. Some farther Motives must be suggested, and Aids obtained, in order to bend the Will to Duty, and to forward the Attainment of that Perfection, which we are sincerely labouring to attain. But, none of these could be sufficiently assured on the mere Principles of human Reason.

We do not indeed, nor ought we to deny, but that Men in former Times, and even before the Incarnation of *Christ*, did hope the best, upon doing the best they could: and to this they were led, from considering the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God. They
knew

S E R M O N I. 11

knew He would do all that Goodness and Mercy required to be done : but were at a Loss, and unable to determine certainly, “ How far it was fit that Sin should be “ pardoned at all ; ” -- Whether, to pardon it, could be made reconcileable with several Divine Attributes ; whether the unerring Purity of the Divine Nature could any more approve the Sinner, than the Sin ; and whether inflexible Justice could forbear to punish those, who in strictness *deserved* to suffer.

Whilst Men laboured under these Doubts, which much qualified and abated every comfortable Hope, GOD was pleased to shew Himself ; and, by the great Occurrence of this Day, not merely to enliven their Hope, but to improve it even into Certainty. For, hear the Message of the Angel to the Shepherds ! *Behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People ; — For, unto you is born this Day, in the City of David, a SAVIOUR, which is Christ the Lord.* See here the Remedy of all their spiritual Evils, -- the Supply of all their most important Wants, — the Gratification of their boldest, but virtuous Wishes, — and the Completion, I may say *more* than Completion, of their Hopes. In this single Word [SAVIOUR] every

every thing now hinted at, is contained ; because it carries in it a Redemption from Sin, — a Security of Pardon, — and, in Consequence of that, an Earnest of future Happiness, if we perform the Conditions on which that Happiness is suspended.

This great Work of our Salvation was begun by the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord ; promised, but darkly, to our first Parents ; — afterwards typified to us by many Particulars in the *Jewish* Law ; and then more distinctly foretold and unfolded by the Prophets. Hence, at the Time when our Blessed Lord appeared, a Saviour was by the *Jews* as surely expected, as earnestly wished for. Even the Heathens, tho' but imperfectly taught, yet, conscious of their own Wants, desired him : Happy had it been, if both the One and the Other had known him when come, and had received him when offered, with that Respect which the Dignity of his Person required, and the Importance of the great Work which he came to finish, deserved !

But, I return from this Reflection : For we are not here to consider the Reception, but the Incarnation and Birth of *Christ* ; which being designed for the Salvation of Mankind, was a most signal Instance of Divine

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vine Condescension and Favour. This is my Point, and to this I desire to confine myself.

But, is there any need to prove or to illustrate it beyond what the bare Proposal of the Point suggests? If the great Governor of the World, who was likewise the Author of our Beings, had been justly offended with us; — and we, instead of taking any Steps towards regaining his Favour, (which was the Case of the greatest Part of Mankind) were still going on to provoke him farther by our Impieties; ---- if, whilst Men were doing all this, He himself stepped in for our Relief; can we doubt his Condescension in stooping to us, or can we be insensible of the Favour?

It had been merciful in the Supreme Being to hearken to any Terms, solicited on our Part; --- to overlook, on any Conditions, our past Transgressions against him; and to receive us even upon our meditated Return to him. But, to invite us himself; to employ his own infinite Wisdom in forming a Scheme, which should reconcile his Acceptance of us with his several Attributes; to send his own beloved Son into the World to execute this Scheme, and to do *for his Enemies* as much at least as the best and fondest Man

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Man had ever yet done for his *Friend*, is what deserves at once both our Praise and Wonder.

Still, the merciful Condescension of God will appear in a stronger Light, when we consider, that in order to this Peace, this Réconciliation, it was necessary, that the Second Person in the Divine Nature should be *incarnate*, and become Man, by an intimate Union of the *Divine* Substance with the *Human*. An Event this, so very extraordinary, that some have had the Boldness to dispute its very Possibility : in this especially erring, that they measured the Divine Power not (as they ought) by the real Consistency of Things, but by their own narrow Conceptions ; which low Way of Proceeding, if carried to its full Length, would lead them to dispute many other Things, of which they themselves are most intimately conscious. Thus much, however, we may with Modesty affirm, that the Distance between the *Divine* Nature and the *Human* being infinite, a personal Union of them would be *to us* incredible, were it not evidenced by that which is superior to all other Proof, -- I mean Divine Testimony itself. Here then we fix our Hold, — assuring ourselves, that
this

this Event (astonishing as it must appear) is real ; and with all Humility of Devotion lifting up our Hearts to God, and saying, *Lord, what is Man, that thou hast shewn such Respect unto him ; or the Son of Man, that thou didst thus vouchsafe to visit him !*

II. I pass on to the second Head proposed, viz. to shew, That the following Conduct and Administration of *Christ*, did fully accomplish the great End designed by his Incarnation.

Divines, in treating concerning the Conduct of our Blessed Lord, have considered him as sustaining Three great Offices ; viz. those of *Prophet*, *Priest* and *King* ; under one or other of which, the whole of his Administration may be properly reduced. I shall therefore pursue this Method, — yet with this small Difference, that whereas other Writers have followed the Order of Time, in which our Blessed Lord executed these Offices, I shall chuse rather the Order of Nature : and therefore, tho' our Saviour began, in fact, with Teaching, as preparatory to what was to follow after, — and in this executed his *Prophetic* Office, — yet, as in Order of Conception, a Ground of Reconciliation must be supposed before any farther Advances can be made, — so I shall consider,

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consider, in the first place, his Execution of the Priestly Office. And in this I am farther justified by the Proceeding of *John* the Baptist, who opened the Way to *Christ* by publicly preaching Repentance and Forgiveness, *Mark* i. 4.

As a Priest therefore, he was to make Atonement; not such an one as had been offered in former Times (for Sacrifices of that kind could *make no Man perfect* [*Heb.* x. 1.]) but such as was valuable and effectual of itself — such as had no farther Reference; — and such as being perfectly adequate to the Sins atoned for, should render complete Satisfaction at once, and never need to be repeated.

Here some Man perhaps may say, “God cannot be injured. He is above our Reach. And as nothing on our Part can impair his Happiness, so nothing can possibly increase it. A Satisfaction therefore must, in this respect, be needless.”

But, by *Satisfaction*, do we mean a Reparation of Hurt properly done to God? This we disclaim on the Principle just now mentioned, that no Actions, on our Part, can possibly impair his Happiness.

The real State of the Case is this: By Sin
we

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we had broken in upon, and disordered the Constitution originally fixed by God, and on which depended not only the Manifestation of his glorious Attributes, but the real Good and Interest of the Whole. This Evil must, some way or other, be repaired; the Reparation of which we call *Satisfaction*, as being that which could alone satisfy the Demands of God on us, and dispose him to be reconciled to us.

But then a Question will arise, How could such a Reparation be made? How could the Effects of Sin upon the moral Constitution be removed, and the Divine Authority over intelligent Beings sufficiently vindicated? Here unassisted Man was at a Loss; and the Work required a Skill and Interposition properly Divine.

To this Purpose, *Christ* was born. The Second Person in the Divine Nature was incarnate, and by his Incarnation became as perfectly Man, as he was perfectly God before. This same Person, being thus perfectly God and Man, was, by the Human Nature, capable of suffering; to which its Union with the Divine gave an infinite Value and Importance. On this Foot, the Sacrifice of *Christ* for Sin, when, in the Execution of his Priestly Office, he

offered himself upon the Cross, was Evidence of its vast Heinousness and Demerit, — of the great Displeasure which God justly conceived against it, — of the Dignity of the Divine Law, and the inviolable Authority of the Law-giver. In consequence of all this, it became effectual. For, tho' it did not make Sin to be no Sin, — nor that to be not committed, which really had been committed, — yet, by removing these Effects of Sin, whereby it brought a Contempt on the Divine Law, all is done which could be done to bring Matters back to their original State. This may very fitly be called Reparation; and such Reparation is, in no improper Sense of the Word, Satisfaction.

Let us consider the Case of the fallen Angels; who having presumptuously sinned, have found no Deliverance, but are consigned to eternal Punishment. This had its End, no doubt. But, if it be demanded, what that End could be? The Answer cannot alledge any Good arising to the Sufferers; for, since their Pains are without Remedy, they must, in respect to them, be evil. And yet some good there must arise, or else the All-wise Being could not possibly inflict them. It cannot be good in respect to God himself; for,

for, being perfectly sufficient and independent, He is incapable of receiving the least Addition to his Happiness from any thing which Others enjoy or suffer. It remains, that the Good intended must respect some other intelligent Beings; which having as yet maintained their Innocence, do perhaps continue fixed in that State by the Knowledge of what Others suffer, and shall for-ever suffer for their Crimes. Such Objects, presented to their Minds, affect them much more than even the Beauty of Virtue does: They shew the Importance of Obedience in the strongest Light; and, by preventing in others a like Defection from Virtue, they stop the Contagion of vicious Example, — and give Law that Authority and Force, which it had when made at first, and which ought to be preserved for ever. In this way the fallen Angels, being Ensamples, may be the Means of keeping Others of their own Order in a State of eternal Innocence and Happiness.

The Case is somewhat different in regard to Men: For, whereas the former sinned under the strongest Light, and the greatest Advantages towards preserving their Virtue, — Man was first seduced by the malicious

Artifice of *Satan*. On this Account his State was pitiable; and the All-gracious Being looked upon it with an Eye of Compassion. In Strictness, however, Man might have suffered; and indeed he must have done so, had not a wise Expedient been used to promote, in an higher Degree, the End of Punishment, than it could be promoted by the personal Sufferings of the Offenders.

For, had Man been condemned to eternal Misery, the End to be obtained thereby could not be greater, than that which is promoted by the Punishment of the fallen Angels. It could conduce only to preserve others, — perhaps the Inhabitants of other Systems chiefly, in their Obedience. But is not this more effectually done by the Christian Scheme of Redemption? Is not the Justice and Severity of God more fully manifested, by his punishing, in his own Son, our Crimes, when this Son, by personating Mankind, took their whole Punishment on himself? Could any one be with-held from sinning by the mere Sufferings of Men on that Account, who is not with-held more strongly by this most affecting Consideration? But if this be so, then more is done in the way before us, than could have been effected by the
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Ruin of our Race, and making them the eternal Monuments of Vengeance.

Beyond this, it deserves our Attention, that if Mankind had been condemned to eternal Suffering, they must likewise have proved eternal Sinners; and however, by being made Examples to others, they might have kept them in the ways of Duty, yet they themselves would have gone on for-ever in their Crimes: for, Despair of Forgiveness must have prevented every Degree of Reformation. But now, in the present Scheme, Care is not only taken to secure the Interests of those who never fell, and to repair the Authority of Law, in regard to Them,—but to give it a Force even in reference to those, who, by their Disobedience, had contributed to destroy its Force. It is the Design of God to bring them back; to rescue them from the Influence of the Evil Being; to subdue gradually their Corruptions; and, in the End, to establish them in a Perfection of the moral State. When this is done, (and this great End is now hastening on to its Accomplishment, by the Means which our Blessed Lord hath prescribed) then the Effects of Sin will be destroyed; then the whole Dignity of Law will be restored; and that which ought

to be the inviolable Rule of Action, be observed for ever.

The next Thing, according to the Order of Nature, to be considered, is the Execution of Christ's *Prophetic* Office.

It hath been noted already, that Sin was brought into the World by the Fall of our first Parents; from whom there is derived down to us a depraved and corrupted Nature. Hence both our intellectual and moral Powers have been greatly impaired; and as, in many Instances, we know not what we ought to do; in others, where Ignorance may not be pleaded, there is a remarkable Backwardness, and even Perverseness, in the Will. These Evils must be remedied in some degree: Otherwise no Advantage can be made of the Pardon, which God, for Christ's sake, offers. For it is unreasonable to expect that this should extend to any, but those who embrace it by a religious Return to God.

To prepare Men therefore to receive and be the better for that Peace, which, by his future Sacrifice, our Blessed Lord was about to purchase, he began his Ministry with discharging the part of a Divine Instructor. He called Men to Repentance; and to shew them what this Repentance imported, he pointed
out

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out the several Duties they had violated: Not indeed in the Way which some nice Philosophers might perhaps expect;—not in the Form of System, in which every thing is orderly disposed; but in a Way more suitable to the Capacities of vulgar Disciples: He did it occasionally, and as ordinary Occurrences furnished him with Opportunities to inculcate them with most Advantage. Upon which account, tho' the Vain and Self-conceited might disrelish his Method, yet Scripture informs us, that *the common People heard him gladly*. [Mark xii. 37.]

In this way he taught them Duties, which he enforced not merely as Rules of Convenience, by the Breach of which, some Mischief must arise to our temporal Interests,——but as the express Will of God himself;——as eternal Laws, to which they were indispensably bound; by the Violation of which, they had already incurred Divine Displeasure; and by the future Observance of which, they would as certainly regain God's Favour. He did not indeed disdain the Aids which Philosophy and natural Reason might furnish out for the Service of Religion: These may be useful to Men of Capacity and Leisure; and are never so well employed, as when directed

rected to this Service. - But on Considerations of that Kind he dwelt more sparingly; chusing rather to insist on the great Point of Divine Will, by Him declared, as a Foundation in itself more firm, and an Argument more level to the Apprehensions of every Hearer.

But tho' he did not make all the Use which some think might be made of philosophical Principles, yet he did what was much better, and which Philosophy could never do: He taught Men Doctrines which human Reason could not teach, and which had an especial Influence on Practice. These come in as new Aids for the Service of Religion, and distinguish the Christian from every other religious System: These make it properly His; because taught by no one else before Him.

There are other Matters indeed, which, tho' taught before, are yet strongly insisted on by our Blessed Lord; and made by Him so much the more useful, as they have been rendered by Him so much the more certain. Such are the great Sanctions of Virtue and Religion; I mean, future Reward and Punishment: Of which, whilst some Men expressed themselves doubtfully, they lost a

great deal of their Advantage; and whilst others only hoped or feared them, without such Assurance as could put an End to every reasonable Doubt, their Apprehensions contributed rather to amuse or to disquiet Men, than to become ruling Principles of Action. But our Blessed Lord, by *bringing Life and Immortality to Light thro' the Gospel*, [2 Tim. i. 10.] and by opening to Men the great future Scene of Things, (which will be varied in proportion to their Behaviour in this Life) hath given Force to Laws which was never felt before: And whilst Men attend to this, they must see the Vanity of every vicious Temptation. Such was the Effect which our Blessed Lord's Teaching had on his first Disciples. The great Concerns of another World, in so lively a manner impressed upon them, made them disregard all the Terrors or Allurements of this Life; and with the truest Greatness of Mind to maintain their Religion, notwithstanding the Loss of all that was reckoned valuable, and the Suffering of all that was esteemed terrible. If, in Course of Time, Men have abated much of this religious Fervour, it is not owing to their Improvement, but their Degeneracy. They have attended less to these important Motives,

tives, which would otherwise have influenced them, as they did the more early Professors of the Gospel. But keeping at a less Distance from Temptations, and being, of consequence, more open to the Force of them, they have almost forgotten what our Blessed Saviour taught; and so have failed of the great End intended by him; not thro' the Inefficacy of the Methods proposed, but their own Backwardness to make a right Use of them. Yet, whencesoever this comes to pass, whether thro' the Folly of Inattention, or a resolute Obstinacy in Sin, the Motives themselves are great and weighty, and such as became a Divine Teacher to enforce.

I have suggested before, that by the Corruption of our Nature the Will hath received an unhappy Tendency to Vice. As, to overpower this, greater Evidence is given than Men ever enjoyed before, of future Reward and Punishment; so, to draw them gently the right Way, we have the most consummate Example of Virtue set us in the Person of Him, who came to teach the Rules of it. Our Blessed Lord says, *he came to fulfil the Law*; [Matt. v. 17.] that is, not only to accomplish the Prophecies concerning him, and to answer all the typical Representations of him,

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him, but likewise to discharge every Part of moral Righteousness; which End he pursued with so much Care and Zeal, as gave Life to the Rules he prescribed, and shewed, that Virtue is in itself both practicable and lovely.

A Difference there was, and that vastly great, between the Case of our Blessed Lord and ours. He, as to his human Nature, was perfectly innocent, and free from all that Bias to Sin, which the best Men experience in themselves. On this Account the unerring Practice of Righteousness was to him easy, tho' to us, in our present infirm State, impossible: For, the Apostle tells us, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us* [1 John, i. 8.]. What therefore can be done in this Case? For tho' Instruction may make our Duty clearer,—tho' Motives may enforce it more strongly,—and good Example may render us less excusable, whilst we refuse to follow it,—yet if all these cannot make us righteous, and if perfect Righteousness be indispensably required, then Christ lived and died in vain.

To obviate this Difficulty, our Blessed Lord hath taught us this most comfortable Doctrine,

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trine, that God will abate in the rigorous Demands of Justice; and; whilst we *believe* and *trust* in *Christ*, and do the best we can, will graciously accept our Sincerity, in lieu of the most perfect Obedience. Laws indeed must be strict, and cannot dispense with themselves: But the Law-giver, upon sufficient Reasons, may abate: And a good Law-giver will be apt to consider rather what may be hoped for in those subjected to him, than what might, upon the whole, be wished for. Agreeably to this, the Terms of Acceptance, as published by our blessed Lord, are mercifully accommodated to the present State of Things; in which, being unable at once to get the entire Mastery of our Passions, we shall yet please God by our most thorough Endeavours of doing so. Our State in this Life must be continually progressive,—conquering, and going on to conquer; till at length, when our Passions are, as to the main, subdued,—when Virtue shall become the reigning Principle,—and our Errors in Action rather prove some Abatement in Excellency, than deserve to be esteemed heinous,—then will God receive us to himself; and as the Reward of what we have so well begun, and hitherto so successfully carried on,

place

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place us beyond the Danger of falling back again. This will be that Beginning of Heaven, on which we shall enter as soon as we quit this Life; when, approved and loved of God, and dwelling in his more immediate Presence, we shall still go on to improve farther; continually rising, as in Perfection, so likewise in Happiness, without Bounds either of Duration or of Degree.

There is yet to be observed, that, in carrying on the Work of our Salvation, our Blessed Lord hath not only sustained the Offices of *Priest*, and *Prophet*, but that likewise of *King*; the Importance of which, to the End designed, I am now to shew distinctly.

It hath been already noted, that, in order to qualify us to receive, and make Advantage of, the Pardon offered, Duty hath been explained; important Doctrines taught; the Sanctions of Virtue enlarged and ascertained; a perfect Example exhibited; and the Terms of Acceptance adapted to the present Capacities of human Nature. Yet still, this is not all which our Blessed Lord hath been pleased to do for us: He hath vouchsafed to take us under his own Government and Protection; and, by becoming our Head, to lead

lead us on, whilst we follow his unerring Guidance, to sure Victory and Triumph.

To this purpose he laid the Foundation of a regular Society, of which he himself is the Supreme, tho' Invisible, Governor: Into this Society all Persons were to be admitted by Baptism; Persons of every Nation, so admitted, were to consider themselves as Fellow-members of *Christ*. Under him, the Apostles were the first Ministers in this spiritual Kingdom; being appointed to admit, ---to teach,---to exhort,---to reprove,---to censure,---to exclude; and, in short, to do every Office agreeably to his Directions, and in Subordination to his Authority, which may serve either to maintain, or to edify this Society. Under these were other inferior Officers likewise constituted, if not by *Christ* himself, yet by the Apostles at least,---who had their proper Share of Power, to be exercised for the sole Good and Benefit of the Church. The Administration of these Persons, whilst acting rightly, and within their proper Bounds, is the Administration of *Christ*: Their Teaching is His: Their Exhortations or Reproofs, are His: Their Sentence of Absolution or Condemnation, when rightly

rightly pronounced, is confirmed by Him :
And, in this Sense, *he that heareth them,*
heareth Christ.

But, a more illustrious Instance of Regal Power, was, his sending the *Holy Ghost*, the Comforter ; who, agreeably to his Promise, was to supply his Absence. By his miraculous Operation, the first Preachers of the Gospel were enabled to speak in Languages they never learned,---to inculcate Doctrines not only beyond human Discovery, but Comprehension,---and to confirm their Truth by Miracles, above the Power of any visible Agents to produce. By these means the Careless were made attentive,---the Infidels were converted,---the Believing were confirmed,---and the Desponding were inspirited : So that, within a small Compass of Time, Christianity was spread thro' most Parts of the then known World : The Professors of it, supported in this Manner, and farther assisted in the Ways I am going to mention, generally living up to the Rules of their Profession, and becoming as Lights amidst a crooked and perverse Generation.

These then were the extraordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit ; which, tho' more surprising, were not more serviceable to the Cause

Cause of Virtue, than those others which we term ordinary and common. These latter are distinguished likewise from those I have already mentioned by a remarkable Circumstance; that whereas the One, being principally intended for the Propagation of the Gospel, were confined to the more early Ages, the Other, being of perpetual Use, are still continued to the Church. And thus hath been accomplished the Prediction of our Blessed Lord, that *the Comforter shall abide with us for ever.* [*John xiv. 16.*]

These ordinary Operations of the Blessed Spirit respect either the Ministers of Christ's spiritual Kingdom,---or else the several Members of it in their personal Capacities. The former are by his secret Influences assisted in discovering God's Will themselves,---in the imparting the Discoveries thus made,---in enforcing his Commands,---in awakening the Drowsy,---in encouraging the Slothful,--in holding back those who are running into the Commission of Sin; and, lastly, in reducing such, as, through Error or Perverseness, have strayed from the Ways of Righteousness: In a word, Efficacy is hereby given to all their just Administrations: For the Apostle tells us, that *Paul may plant, and Apollos*

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Apollos water, but it is God only who giveth Increase. [1 Cor. iii. 6.]

In regard to the several Members of Christ's Church in their personal Capacities, the Influences of the Holy Spirit are still more important, because more general. They extend to every Thought, and Word, and Action. By these, good Sentiments are suggested,---the backward Will inclined,---virtuous Resolutions confirmed,---Courage in opposing Difficulties and Dangers inspired,---the Force of Temptations abated,---and the Man throughout so perfectly strengthened, as to be able to go thro' with Honour. Hence the Laws declared by *Christ* come gradually to have their Effect; the Corruption first introduced into human Nature by the Artifice of Satan, and Folly of our first Parents, wears off,---its original virtuous Disposition is restored; and Man, on whom God could not look with Approbation in his polluted State, becomes the worthy Object of his Favour.

When these Ends are attained, and the Number of the Elect accomplished, then shall follow that most glorious Display of Power with which the regal Authority of *Christ* shall be concluded: For, then cometh the End, when *the Dead, which are in their*

Graves, shall bear his Voice, and shall come forth; [John v. 28.] and the Almighty Judge render to every Man according to his Works. Death, the last Enemy, being thus destroyed, and all things in this Manner put under Christ's Feet, his regal Kingdom, having attained the Ends for which it was instituted, shall cease: The Power which he before held, as a Mediatorial King, be given up, and *God shall be all in all. [1 Cor. xv. 24—28.]*

Then the grand Scene shall open; into which, if we may dare hope to penetrate at this Distance, we may imagine with what rapturous Joy the Blessed shall look back upon their Deliverance. Indeed, when the good Man first leaves this World, his Fate is, in itself fixed, and he enters, in some sort, into his Master's Joy. But, as the State of Separation between Soul and Body is an imperfect State, so the Happiness to be then enjoyed will be proportionable; and perhaps consist chiefly in thoughtful Anticipation of what shall really be enjoyed hereafter. But, when the last Sentence of Absolution shall be pronounced, then all the Glories of Heaven shall be revealed; then God himself shall be seen as he is, and every worthy Desire be gratified.

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tified. The Understanding, now clouded with Ignorance, shall be opened to discern the Beauties which were before concealed from it; the Will, at present wandering between Right and Wrong, be eternally determined to the best; and the Affections, which in this Life are so apt to be misplaced, shall be for ever fixed on an Object supremely excellent and lovely; from all which must result such agreeable Wonder, — such steady Complacency, and such entire Delight, as exceeds by far the utmost Stretch of our Conceptions. Here then must we stop, because nothing farther can be said or thought of.

III. I shall now hasten to the last Head mentioned, viz. that the proposing this End, and bringing it to Accomplishment by such extraordinary Means, is not only a Ground of the utmost Gratitude on Man's Part, but of Joy and Praise even in the Angels themselves.

When I speak of Gratitude on Man's Part, I mean it principally in relation to the present Life, and with a special Eye to the Solemnity of this happy Festival. For, as to the Blessed above, they need be urged by no Arguments; since they must be strongly deter-

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mined this Way by their own Rectitude of Mind, and most intimate Consciousness of the Importance of Salvation. They feel their Happiness; on which as they reflect with Joy, so they must at the same time look up with Thankfulness to the Author of it. And as the Sense of their Enjoyments must inspire Gratitude, so this, in its Turn, will serve to heighten their Enjoyments.

The Case is different with regard to Men on this Side the Grave. Having the End only in View, and that perhaps at a considerable Distance, — and a thousand idle Amusements interrupting them, and drawing off their Attention from it, they need to be reminded of what is in itself clear, and urged to discharge what is in itself excellent and engaging. I have observed just before, that the Blessed in Heaven, feeling their own Happiness, are from thence determined to grateful Sentiments, as the immediate Consequence of such Happiness. At present, we are in Pursuit of what they enjoy. And therefore, in order to raise like Sentiments in us, what is thus distant must be brought home; — must by Faith be embraced, and by Meditation rendered familiar to us.

I have,

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I have, in the former Part of this Discourse represented the miserable State, in which Men were before the coming of *Christ*, and in which they must have continued still, had *Christ* never come to save us. I have explained, in such manner as a Discourse of this Sort will admit, the Christian Scheme of Salvation, and what our Blessed Lord hath done under each of his several Offices, in order to promote it; carrying your Thoughts on to the Consummation of Things, and the Opening of the last grand Scene. Farther we are unable to go at present, and farther, I hope, we need not; for if these Matters are but duly attended to, the Effect of such Attention must be certain; since, if we are thoroughly persuaded of the infinite Love of Christ towards us, and the infinite Importance of what he hath done for us, we can no more cease to love and thank him, whilst we think on these Things, than we could cease to do so, if put in Possession of the Happiness we now hope for.

Sensible of this, the Church hath appointed the annual Solemnity of this Day, on which especially to recollect our Thoughts, and fix our Attention on this Subject. An Institution so fit, so reasonable, so pious, one

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might think could have met with no Opposition from any, who called themselves Christians, especially such as affected to be thought the only good Christians. Be it, that we are unable to determine precisely the Day on which our Blessed Lord was born: can that be thought a Reason why no Day should be observed in Memory of his Birth? Be it, that some Persons have abused this Festival to purposes of Intemperance: must it therefore be turned into a Fast? Or, supposing that the Church of *Rome* hath practised many Superstitions, in their undue Celebration of this Day: shall others therefore go into a Superstition on the opposite Side, and religiously abstain from any Celebration of it at all? A wise and serious Person would think, that if others, through Indiscretion, or vicious Temper, have abused this Solemnity, he, for his part, is the more concerned to restore it to its proper Use; and, by an exemplary Conduct on this Occasion, both to express his own Gratitude, and to edify the Church of Christ.

There is still another thing behind, which must not be overlooked, because the Words of my Text directly lead me to consider it; I mean, that the proposing the Salvation of Mankind,

Mankind, and bringing it to Accomplishment, by the Administration of Christ, is Ground of Praise and Joy even in the Angels themselves.

With regard to Man, this Point is clear enough, because his supreme Interests are concerned in it: But, in reference to the Angels, it may be said, however the Greatness of the End, and Wisdom of the Contrivance, may excite their Admiration, yet there does not seem to be sufficient Ground for that Praise, which is accompanied likewise with Joy. It may be said, that these are Beings already fixed in a State of Happiness; and being raised so many Degrees above us, must therefore be independent on us; on which account, as our Concerns have no Relation to theirs, so nothing which happens to Us, can properly affect Them.

But, can we suppose, that these excellent Beings are so entirely wrapt up in themselves, as to have no regard to any thing which others enjoy, or suffer? Can we suppose they have no Principle of Goodness, --- not even in the least Degree? which Principle, in whatever Creature it subsists, must be attended with all its kindred Passions; and imply a Desire of Good to others, --- a Joy when that

Good is procured, --- and a continued Satisfaction, whilst that Good continues to be enjoyed. So that on this foot, the projecting and executing such a Scheme for the Salvation of Mankind, must become matter of Joy to them, unless we suppose they are void of that Principle, by which they continue in the State they are in ; I mean that of happy Angels. And, agreeably to this, the Scripture represents them as *ministering* to Mankind in the Affairs of *Salvation* [*Heb. i. 14.*] and *rejoicing over every Sinner which repenteth*, [*Luke xv. 10.*]

However, the main Point I shall insist on here, is this, that our Salvation is the Ground of Praise even to the Angels, because the whole Scheme, taken together, is a noble Manifestation of the Divine Attributes.

If Goodness be supposed the original Principle, by which the supreme Being was induced to create Man, this is manifested in an higher Degree, by the Care taken of his Salvation ; by pointing out the End ; by conducting him in the Way to it ; and by urging him on to the Attainment of it, by every Method of Tenderness.

If Man, seduced by the Temptations of the Devil, had disobeyed the Commands of
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his Creator, and was going on to aggravate his Crimes, by repeated Instances of Impiety, surely it was no ordinary Mercy to hold him back, when precipitating his Ruin; not barely to accept Terms of Peace, but to offer them; and even to invite his own rebellious Subjects to return.

If Persons, thus offending, did really deserve to suffer; and violated Law, did, on the score of governing Justice, require Reparation; --- Justice is, in this Scheme, satisfied to the full, such Reparation being sufficiently made by the Sufferings of our Blessed Lord; And so the great Difficulty which may be thought to arise from an appearing Inconsistency between Justice and Mercy, is entirely avoided.

If Sinners, whilst they continue such, and wilfully offend, are unfit Objects of Favour, and the Divine Purity cannot possibly approve the Criminal; ----- this same Perfection is manifested to great Advantage, by promoting the real Interests of Virtue; by the Precepts, the Motives, and Sanctions of the Gospel; and by those farther Influences of the Holy Spirit, which gradually lead Men on to Perfection in moral Goodness.

If chusing the most noble End, and pursuing that End by the most suitable Means, especially where such Means are various, remote, and intricate; If to do these be Instances of most consummate Wisdom; then see in the Christian Scheme a full Display of it! in which the eternal Salvation of Mankind is proposed, ---- the Hindrances in the Way to it removed, --- the Methods for attaining it pointed out, ---- and every thing done to incite, to encourage, and to support Men, which the most thorough View of the whole State of Things could suggest.

I shall add one Attribute more, because it comes in to the Aid of all the rest; --- I mean, Power; without the Exercise of which, several other Attributes could have no Effect. For, what is Goodness, without an Ability to execute its Purposes? What is Mercy, if there is no restraining the Hand which is lifted up for Vengeance? What is even Justice itself, without a Power to do every Thing which Justice either requires, or admits of? What is Purity, without a Capacity to promote its Interests? And what is Wisdom, but an ineffectual Director, if there be no Energy to enforce its Dictates, and bring its most noble Designs to their Event? Agreeably to
this,

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this, we see, that in the whole Conduct of this Affair, there were the most illustrious Displays of Power ; of such as exceeded all created Nature, even the Power of that malicious Being, who, belonging perhaps to an Order next to God, had the Vanity to act as God ; and was disposed to hinder, if possible, his Operations. But vain were all such Efforts : *Christ*, though cruelly put to Death, rose again. His Religion was spread in spite of Opposition : It still prevails, notwithstanding the utmost Endeavours to hinder it : and will still go on to prevail farther, till all Enemies shall be subdued ; and Death, the last Enemy of Mankind, shall be destroyed.

And now, upon the Review, can we doubt whether this be Matter of just Praise to the Angels ? Can we doubt whether Beings of consummate intellectual Capacities, can be pleased with contemplating the most proper Objects of the Understanding, the Manifestations of Divine Excellencies ?---- Or, being pleased, can do other than celebrate God's Praises, for these Manifestations ?

I would beg to know, what is properly the Object in God of Praise, but that which is properly his Glory ? And does not the Glory of God consist in the Manifestation of his

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Perfections? What is it, but this, which is the Motive to all his external Actions? The original Ground must be within Himself, though the Effect may reach much farther; in the Manifestation of which Perfections, though the Benefit may especially respect *some*, yet the Excellency displayed will, in a great Degree, concern *all*. I shall not therefore doubt to affirm, that as the Angels are the highest Order of intelligent Beings; ---- and as some of the highest Pleasures arise from the Employment of the Understanding on the most excellent Objects; ---- so their Contemplation of God's Excellencies, may be one Ground, even of their own Happiness; and if such, it must likewise proportionably be a proper Foundation of their Praise. No one can think but the Display of God's Perfections, of whatever kind they are, and on whatever Object they are terminated, must be Matter of delightful Consideration to all rightly disposed Intelligences. But this will hold especially with regard to Angels, whose most proper Employment it is to contemplate, and to praise God.

To bring the Matter more home to ourselves. We shall find it one great Article of our own Happiness hereafter, to examine,
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and penetrate thoroughly into this wonderful and most amazing Scheme; to see all the Harmony and Correspondency of its Parts; their joint Subserviency to one grand End; and all, both Separately and in Conjunction, setting forth the Glory of God. We shall be captivated by the engaging Subject; and holding it fast for-ever, make it the eternal Matter of our Praise.

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S E R M O N II.

The true Grounds of the J E W S rejecting the MESSIAS, considered.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

JOHN i. II.

He came to his Own, and his Own received him not.

OUR Blessed Lord (whose Nativity we are this Day to commemorate) is represented by *St. John*, as “*The Word of God*,”----as “*God himself*,”----as “*The Author and Creator of all Things*,” [ver. 3.] as “*exercising a moral Providence over his Creatures*,”----and, as “*that true Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*.” [ver. 9.]. Upon these Accounts

counts he must have an unalienable Property in all Mankind: And therefore, when he came into the World, and made the Offers of Salvation to every Man, it might, in a strict Sense of the Words, be said, "*He came to his Own.*"

But, over and above this Interest he must have in the whole Race of human Kind, the *Jews* were related to him in an especial Manner, as * "The Angel of the Covenant," ---- "Their Redeemer from Captivity," -- "The Giver of their Law," ---- "Their Guide in the Wilderness," ---- "The constant Governor of their State ;" ---- and, at last, when he assumed human Nature, "as their King, by Descent from *David.*" So that in these Views the Children of *Israel* were *Christ's Own*, in a more eminent and peculiar Sense.

And this seems to be the Meaning here intended by the Evangelist. It is affirmed in the Text, "[Christ] *came to his Own, and his Own received him not :*" And this is affirmed, not with reference to the Preaching of the Apostles, when they *turned to the Gen-*

* See Archbishop *Tenison Of Idolatry*, from p. 320 to 370. Some Thoughts concerning Religion, natural and revealed, from p. 85 to 88.

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tiles,---but the Preaching of Christ himself, ---the Application which he made to the Jews in his own proper Person, by whom he was denied and rejected in the Presence of Pontius Pilate.

But, is it credible, that a Person who ought, on so many Accounts, to be reckoned Venerable, and to be beyond measure dear to them,---whose Appearance was so often foretold, and so long expected by them;---is it credible, I say, that such a Person should fail of a suitable Reception?---especially, when it is considered, what a Message he came to deliver,---what glad Tidings he brought,---and what Salvation he offered;---a Salvation as much beyond their Deliverance from *Egypt*, as the great Interests of Eternity exceed the little Concerns of this short, and, as it were, dying Life. One might think that the Subject Matter of his Message, setting aside the Excellence and Dignity of his Person, should have engaged Attention, and have procured him a most respectful Hearing.

To which may be added, that every thing was done by him, which was fit and proper to be done, in Evidence of his great Commission. Prophecies were fulfilled, and Mi-

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acles were wrought ;---abundantly sufficient both to direct the Understanding, and to influence the Will.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the Text tells us (and all History concerning this Affair confirms it), *When he came to his Own, his Own received him not.* Most of the Jews rejected him. Some came to hear, and to find Fault ; some merely to gratify a Curiosity ; some rested in Wonder and Amazement at what they saw ; some, overpowered by present Motives, confessed him for a while, but *in Time of Temptation fell away* ; and others disappointed the whole Effect of his Miracles, by ascribing them to the Devil. So that when we compare the Fewness of those honest and religious Persons, who acknowledged and adhered to *Christ*, with those vastly greater Numbers, who either overlooked, or contemptuously rejected him, we shall see how justly it is declared in the Text, *He came to his Own, and his Own received him not.*

But, what could be the true Grounds and Causes of this strange Behaviour ?---A Behaviour not only irrational, but unnatural ; and such as must at once render them unacceptable to God, and abhorred by serious Men.

This

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This Subject I shall consider at present ; yet I shall not treat it as a Matter of Curiosity, the unfolding which may gratify the Inquisitive, but as a Point of great Importance to us ; ---a Matter which will furnish us with many useful Instructions ; and suggest Thoughts which may serve either to direct or reform our Conduct.

Now the Causes of the *Jews* rejecting the *Messias* are founded partly in the Temper and Condition of the *Jews* themselves ; and partly, in the wise Permission of Providence, which did not controul the perverse Wills of Men.

As to those which belong to the former Head, they are principally such as follow ;

1. Laziness and Indolence, which prevented their making proper Enquiries into the Authority of our Blessed Lord's Commission.

2. Strong Prejudice and Adherence to former Opinions and Practices ; by which their Understandings were blinded, and unable to see the Evidence produced.

3. Corrupt Passions and Appetites, which had equally an Influence on the Apprehension and the Will ; which weakened their

Intellectual Powers, and made them averſe to a Religion which condemned them.

'It hath been hinted already (and I muſt here take it for granted, without entering diſtinctly into Proofs), that when our Bleſſed Lord appeared, he gave abundant Evidence of his Divine Authority. This, I ſay, he did, by fulfilling the Prophecies which pointed out the *Meſſias*,---and by performing thoſe Miracles, *which no one could perform unleſs God were with him.* From hence ſufficient Evidence aroſe who he was, and what Authority belonged to him,---and what Obligations were incumbent on the *Jews* to receive,---to honour,---and to obey him.

But, what Force can Evidence have, where Men are unwilling to attend to Evidence?---where they will give themſelves no Trouble either to ſearch after it,---or, when offered, diſtinctly to apprehend it?

It is allowed indeed, that Proof perceived, muſt act irrefiſtably on the Underſtanding. Self-evident Propositions, when the Meaning of them is once underſtood, are inwardly aſſented to by all; and where the ſeveral Steps in a Demonſtration are ſeen, the Conclusion is likewise indiſputable. It is not in the Power

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Power of the Mind any more to withstand Evidence perceived, than of the Eye to withhold its Perception, when it is duly affected by the proper Object of Sight. To affirm otherwise, is to maintain, "that a Thing *is*, and *is not* perceived at the same time." But yet with regard to Propositions self-evident, Men may refuse to learn the Meaning of such Propositions : And as to Demonstration, they may be careless and inattentive ; and so remain ignorant of the Conclusion, because they will not pursue it through the several Steps which lead to it.

What may thus appear in relation to Matters of more simple Science, is very remarkable where the Thing enquired after is perplexed and involved ;---where we are not only to consider the direct Proofs of the Thing, but to compare them with, what may be called, a Sort of Counter-evidence ;---where we must set one thing against another ; and the proper Evidence will arise from the greater Weight which belongs to Proof on a certain Side. In such Cases as these, the Will hath a considerable Interest. It can suspend or divert the Enquiry ; it can suggest Difficulties which really are not, and heighten those which are ; it can lessen the Importance

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of the Truth sought after,---and represent the Pains of the Search as an Over-balance to the Advantages of a Discovery. No Wonder then is it, if Persons of an indolent and lazy Temper should be backward to enquire into points which it must cost them some Trouble to determine ; and should rather content themselves in their present Ignorance and Error, than, by endeavouring to exert themselves, destroy their settled Ease and Quiet. On Persons of this Disposition, Demonstration will lose its Force, because, whatever Strength Argument in itself may have, it ceases to be Argument to that Person who is unwilling to attend to it.

The Miracles which *Christ* wrought, were, no doubt, surprising to all Observers ; and it is impossible but they must be affected by them in some measure. But yet, every Wonder is not properly a Miracle ; nor is every Miracle to be considered as a Divine Attestation. Room therefore we see there was for raising Questions even concerning the Miracles of *Christ* ; and something must be done to ascertain their Nature, and to settle their Importance.

Upon this Foot, a Person who would give himself no Trouble to be satisfied of what
Kind

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Kind these Wonders were,--or what Conclusions might reasonably be deduced from them, *though seeing, might be said, not to see.* He might be present at these Miracles, and express his Wonder on the Occasion: but yet, if he viewed them as mere Matters of Curiosity, they must have just the same Effect on him, as any other extraordinary Feats would have;—they must amuse him for a-while,--perhaps furnish out Matter for future Talk; but never create any Alteration either in his Sentiments or his Conduct.

And this may reasonably be thought one Cause why the *Jews* rejected *Christ*, notwithstanding sufficient Evidence had been offered to them of his Divine Authority. It cannot be questioned, but, amongst such Numbers of Men, there were some careless and inattentive,--who used their Senses more than their Reason,--and cared not for the Pains of deep Search, and accurate Examination. Perhaps they might not have any great Attachment to Religion at all,--and think it needless to spend Time either to refute one Scheme, or to establish another. If such there were, it must be natural to expect they would behave in the same manner as we find, in fact, the *Jews* did: they would over-

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look or despise even the *Messias* himself;—and, when worked up by their artful Managers, even call aloud for his Crucifixion; for this likewise is observable, that those who are most backward to examine the Force of a good Argument, are most open to Impressions from a bad one.

I am the more confirmed in assigning the before-mentioned Cause of the *Jewish* Infidelity, from considering the Conduct of our Blessed Lord himself; who, upon several Occasions, was pleased to call upon the *Jews* to examine his Pretensions. *Search the Scriptures* (saith he); *for these are they which testify of me* [*John* v. 39.]. And again, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the Works* [*John* x. 37, 38.]. It is clear from hence, that many of the *Jews*,—even those who pretended a Veneration for the Scriptures, and were Eye-witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles, were yet too backward in giving a sufficient Attention to them; and this was the Ground of our Blessed Lord's Exhortation to search and examine Matters thoroughly,—without which it would be absolutely impossible to decide wisely upon the Point.

2. I pass now to the SECOND Cause assigned, why the Jews rejected the *Messias*, viz. Strong Prejudice, and Adherence to former Opinions and Practices. Some of these had no Manner of Foundation; and others, though right in their Original, and whilst justly understood, yet, by being carried too far, became as wrong, and even mischievous, as tho' they had never any real Foundation at all.

Amongst the former were the Belief, "That the *Messias* should be a temporal Prince;"---"That no good thing could come out of *Nazareth*;"---"and that a Person of such an obscure Family as *Jesus* was thought to be, was incapable of being *that Prophet*, which should come into the World."---Among the later, "That the *Jewish* Law must continue for ever;"---"and that the outward Letter of it was more to be considered than its inward and spiritual Meaning."

To these Points they adhered most strongly; especially to the first of them,—inasmuch that the very Disciples of *Christ* were not thoroughly brought off from it till after his Resurrection,—till he had distinctly unfolded the Truth to them, and opened their Minds, that they might understand the Scriptures.

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The Truth is, the *Jews* (whose State had once made so great a Figure under the Reigns of *David* and *Solomon*) had been for a long Time cruelly enslaved by a Succession of Oppressors; under which dismal Circumstances they endeavoured to keep up their Spirits by the Prospect of a Deliverance by their *Messias*. To this Purpose they applied all those high things declared in Scripture concerning the Glory and Extent of his Dominion. But, Passages of that Kind had no Relation to their Civil State: They were meant only of a spiritual Kingdom; and must have been so understood, had they given themselves leave to consider the Whole of those Prophecies, and not endeavoured rather to flatter their Hopes, than truly to inform their Minds.

Such likewise was the Prejudice drawn from the Residence of our Blessed Lord at *Nazareth*. It had no Foundation but in their own ill Opinion of the Place; out of which, as it had not been heard that any Prophet arose,--so they thought it a Reflection on his Character, that any Prophet should arise from thence.

As little Ground had they to suppose, that the *Messias* must belong to some creditable
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and flourishing Family. He was indeed to descend from *David*, as our Blessed Lord did most unquestionably: But, as Families of the greatest Distinction may be traced back to some obscure Original,---so those of the most illustrious Descent, may, through the Accidents of Time, become obscure. And no Obscurity of this Nature could be thought any just Prejudice to his Claim, had they been capable of examining the Scriptures with any measure of Impartiality.

Other Prejudices I have said there were, which seem to have had a better Foundation, and which became wrong only by being strained too far.

Such was their extreme Fondness for the *Jewish* Law; and their Persuasion that it must last for ever. This Law was, we must confess, of Divine Original,---and therefore a proper Subject of their Veneration: And the Obligation of it likewise was to last so long, as there were any proper Ends to be accomplished by it. But then it must be affirmed, if these Ends should be once fully accomplished, the Law itself must cease of course: And consequently, our Saviour did not destroy it in the Way of strict Repeal, but only void it by fulfilling all it was intended

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intended to inculcate. The Difficulties therefore, which arose from hence, were owing to wrong Prejudice, — whilst mistaking the Truth, Men were led into the grossest and most pernicious Error.

There remains but One Thing farther to be noted at present, in relation to the strict Meaning and Intention of that Law; concerning which the *Jews* were so exceedingly scrupulous, as to adhere entirely to the Letter of it. Upon this Account it was, that they sometimes objected against our Blessed Lord, — as though He, from whom that very Law proceeded, was most forward to violate it. But, herein they were under a great Mistake; because, in many Instances, the outward Form did but figure some better Thing it was designed to signify; and therefore, to pursue rather the Meaning than the Letter, was to obey that Law which He seemed to oppose.

However, wrong as these, and such like Prejudices were, yet by getting Possession of their Minds, they proved governing Principles of their Actions, and rendered them as incapable of deciding rightly, or of behaving wisely, as though they had been intirely divested of their Reason. And, in truth, this

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is observable of every kind of wrong Prejudice, that, in Proportion to its Strength, it fetters and ties down the Mind; it renders it incapable of looking abroad, and viewing Things as they truly are; so that whatever Evidence may be offered against strong Prepossessions, it appears as no Evidence at all, the Understanding being, as to such Points, blind, and without its proper and usual Discernment.

It happens in some Sense to the Soul, as it doth to the Body; in which rooted Habits prevail so far, as to lay Men under a sort of Necessity in their Actions; they are determined even without, and as it were against, their Wills: Nor is it possible to destroy such Habits, but by great Diligence, and slow Degrees. So likewise, in reference to the Mind; where Men have been long used to treat certain Points as indisputable, they are shocked at their being brought into Debate; and so far from desiring to be better informed, that they avoid it with a kind of religious Horror.

This is sometimes seen in Minds not evil or corrupt in general; in such, as would willingly obey God, if they were not prevented by these unhappy Circumstances, from
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learning what the real Will of God is : And possibly some of the very *Jews*, whose Prejudices prevented their acknowledging the *Messias*, might be Objects of Divine Compassion : Our Saviour seems to have treated them as such, even whilst he suffered on the Cross ; and his Prayer for their Pardon implies, that their Case was not absolutely desperate ; *Father, forgive them, said He, for they know not what they do.* But, however this were, yet it is certain enough, that they laboured under inveterate Prejudices ; and these Prejudices were one main Cause of their not receiving Christ.

3. The Third and last Cause mentioned, was corrupt Passion and Appetite ; a Cause not less prevalent than the former, but much less excusable.

If the *Jews*, as to their *then* State, be considered either in their *religious* Capacity, or their *civil*, they will be found to have degenerated vastly, from the Piety and Virtue of some of their Ancestors, — and to have stood in infinite Need of that Saviour, they were induced to reject, by the very Need they had of Him.

In no other Age, had they been crumbled into so many Sects and Parties, — most of them

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them hating and despising each other, and aiming at little more than to advance their own Side, and depress all others: They had defeated the very End and Design of Religion, by adhering so strictly to the mere Form and Shew of it; and to atone for violating the moral Parts, they had invented some little Performances of their own: These they called the Traditions of their Elders; and by these our Blessed Lord himself observes, *they made the Commands of God of none Effect.*

In their civil Capacity, they were disobedient and rebellious to their Governors, — unjust and injurious to their Equals, — proud and insolent to their Inferiors; not to mention any other Particulars, which made them contemptible to their Neighbours, and intolerable to themselves. Such was the Temper and Condition of the *Jews* at that Time; ---- of a great Part of them, I mean; for, it is not credible they should be all of that Character, nor doth the present Argument require me to suppose it.

Now, how might we expect, that Persons, so disposed, would act, upon the Appearance of the *Messias*? Had they been sensible of their own wretched Condition, they would
doubtless

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doubtless have embraced the Remedy offered them, ---- as those in Fact did, who were less blind and insensible. But, their very Danger made them unapprehensive of what they were exposed to. They were addicted to the Interests of their narrow Sects, which they would not desert even to purchase their Salvation. They had lost the very Sense and Taste of Virtue, which real Religion endeavoured to cultivate; and, to prevent its being restored, had substituted something else of less Consequence in its Room: And these Inventions they supported by the Credit and Authority of their Elders, which they reckoned it highly criminal to question. They were intractable and disobedient, even to civil Magistrates; and therefore, indisposed to admit any Commands they did not like to obey. — As they were unjust and injurious, it was improbable they should be won over to Gentleness, Charity and Beneficence. And, as they were proud and insolent, they were incapable of being either ruled, or taught: To be short, the whole Scheme of Religion, which our Blessed Lord came to inculcate, was against them; and therefore, it is no Wonder they should oppose and reject it.

In

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In Truth, as the right Conduct of the Understanding is the Effect of Virtue, as well as the Cause of it, so, where Men are enslaved to Vice, this Province must be neglected: And, of Consequence, the Mind, which was originally capable of high Improvements, be weakened and impaired, and at length unfitted to determine concerning Truth and Falsehood, with any manner of Certainty.

And if it should be said, in Contradiction to this, that Men of the finest Parts are sometimes found to be most corrupt, — yet this, at least, may be observed, that Persons of that Character betray their Want of Capacity, when they treat Subjects of a moral or religious Nature. Or if, in some Cases, they can write finely, and set good Rules to others, yet this is all Speculation with regard to themselves: They either do not see the real Force of their own Reasonings, — or, are incapable of being influenced and governed by them.

And this seems to have been the Case of the *Jews*, now under Consideration. They were, a great Part of them, as I said, miserably corrupt, when our Blessed Lord came to reform them, and to cure these Cor-

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ruptions. He wrought Miracles; and these Miracles surpris'd them; and gained him some Respect, — especially, whilst they felt some natural Good to themselves, from them. But these very Persons deserted him, upon their hearing his *hard Sayings*; upon his urging Duties they cared not to practise, or condemning Vices they were unwilling to part with. So that, in a natural way, they were incapable of admitting any Scheme, but what should be as bad, or worse, than what they had embraced already; some Scheme which would flatter their Vices, make them easy in their Corruptions, — and render them more the Sons of Perdition, than they were before.

Since this was the Case, God gave them up to themselves: He let them enjoy the Choice they had made, and sit down in the Darkness which they loved. Just and Wise are all his Doings, though in many Cases, to us, unsearchable. And therefore, though we should not be able to account distinctly for his present Proceeding, yet it would become us to believe it right, and to adore him as well for the Judgments he inflicts, as the Favours he bestows.

But, we need not take the Advantage of
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this Reflection: Reasons sufficient are open to us, why he did not subdue the perverse Wills of Men; why he suffered Nature to take its usual Course; and did not interpose to force that Assent, Men were unwilling and indisposed to give.

It may be thought, (and hath sometimes been so) that as God might, by his super-eminent Power, have made all Opposition to the *Messias* cease, so he was concerned to do it, for the Honour of his Son, and the Advantage of the World: — That whereas *Christ* came with full Authority from the Father himself, and with ample Means to compass the Salvation of all Mankind, so the Dignity of his Character and Person was interested in the Success of his Message, — and the universal Happiness required, that no Obstruction to these Means should be permitted.

I shall offer Two Observations, which I conceive will take off from the Weight of what is here alledged.

The First is this; God was upon no Account concerned to force Mens Assent, by any direct and immediate Influence on their Minds. And,

Secondly, To have done this at first, with-

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out continuing the same Method for-ever, must have been more prejudicial to the Cause of Christianity, than to have proceeded, as in Fact he did. And,

1. I affirm, God was on no account concerned to force Mens Assent, by any direct and immediate Influence on their Minds.

What by his absolute Power he was capable of doing, is another Question: Nor shall I deny his Power, in the present Instance, for this Reason, amongst others, that it hath actually been exercised on some Occasions. Of this St. *Paul* himself was an Example, --- *who was, whatever he was*, by the especial Grace and Favour of God. But, though some singular, and very important Reasons might prevail with him to go out of the common Road, with regard to St. *Paul*; --- yet, it seems to have been no-wise expedient to change the settled Order of Nature, --- to deal in All Cases, as it might be proper to act in One Case, --- or, in short, because there were Reasons for a particular Conduct in One Instance, to do the same, even without Reason, in All others.

The general Method of God's Proceeding with Men, is, to treat them as reasonable and accountable Beings; --- as Beings capable
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of judging, if they please, concerning Evidence produced; and, consequently, as answerable to God for the Conduct of the Understanding, as well as Will. In this Way he dealt with the *Jews*. When he sent his Son into the World, he afforded sufficient Marks of Distinction, whereby he might be known to be such; And when this was done, the whole Blame of his Rejection must rest on those, whose Ignorance was affected.

Let us consider, that by the common Principles of our Nature, every Man is concerned to search after, and to admit the Truth;---to keep himself clear of unreasonable Prejudices and Prepossessions;---and to subdue those Appetites and Passions, which blind the Understanding, and corrupt the Will. We therefore are alone accountable for all the ill Consequences which follow from our heedless Conduct; and God is no more concerned to force Truth upon us, in spite of the Difficulties which we throw in the Way, than he is to over-rule us in our Actions, and to make us Virtuous whether we will or no.

In both Respects he is pleased to leave us in a great measure to ourselves, --- without which, there would be no Merit either in our Faith or Obedience: And in Truth, to speak

strictly, unless we were allowed the Use of our Liberty, the Actions which were thought to proceed from us, would not be properly ours. The Notion of a *necessary Agent* seems to imply a Contradiction, — the Action, on this Supposition, really proceeding from that Cause which imposed the Necessity. The Consequence must be this, — to necessitate Men to the Performance of Things, in themselves fit and proper, must destroy all Virtue in the supposed Agents, and render them incapable Objects of Reward; — It would be inconsistent with the moral Government of God; and destroy the Honour of his Wisdom, as much as it could be supposed to advance the Credit of his Power.

To the same Purpose, let us observe likewise, in the next place, that to have forced Mens Assent at first, without continuing the same Method for ever, must have been more prejudicial to the Cause of Christianity, than to have proceeded as, in fact, God did.

Let us suppose then, that every one who saw and conversed with *Christ*, had been so determined by the over-ruling Power of God, as immediately to receive him. This indeed would have enlarged the Number of the first Converts — in *Judea* at least, where our
Blessed

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Blessed Lord chose to pass his Time. But, as he could not see and converse with every one, perhaps with few, in comparison of the whole Body of the *Jews*; --- in what manner were those others to be managed, who could only hear of him by Report? Were they likewise to be over-ruled in their Scruples by some unseen, irresistible Power? If not, then Room would still be left, to shew their Indolence, or Prejudice, or Passion; and perhaps some farther Inconveniencies would arise, which every one is not aware of.

How easy would it have been for them to have affirmed, that the Persons in whose Presence *Christ* acted, were beforehand addicted to his Interests; --- either bought over to his Side, or attached to him by Acquaintance: And Presumptions of this Kind would have received greater Weight from supposing, that he declined acting in the Presence of those, of whom he was not before secure: Nor could such a Supposition have been well disproved, if all had appeared to be immediately convinced, and unanimous in their Professions. If therefore, it must have happened from hence, that a greater Number of Followers should arise amongst those who saw *Christ*, yet Difficulties would have been

thrown in the Way of those, who knew him only by Report ; and to combat Prejudices of this Kind, would have been no easy Matter.

Or if, on the other hand, these Persons likewise were to be over-born, — and the Gospel, first offered to the *Jews*, were unanimously to be received by the *Jews*, — then it deserves farther to be enquired, how the *Gentiles* likewise were to be dealt with : Were they to be influenced in the same irresistible Manner, — and to embrace *Christ*, as soon as he should be proposed to them ? If not, then I desire to know, whether the concurrent Faith of the *Jews* would not have prejudiced *Christ's* Interests, and have made the *Gentiles* suspect, that they were endeavouring to set up rather a temporal, than a spiritual Prince.

It had been seen in many Instances, (and their Humour was well known at that time) that the *Jews* were desirous of freeing themselves from foreign Dominion, and of establishing (if possible) an Empire and Dominion of their own. Pretensions of this kind every one was concerned to oppose, no doubt ; and any such Endeavours would have been opposed with Zeal. Had it therefore happened, that the *Jews* had universally espoused the

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the Interests of any One Man, (and especially, had it happened without any sufficient apparent Reason) the *Gentiles* must have suspected it as a political, rather than a religious Design: And consequently, they must, had they been true to themselves, have rejected such Pretensions; or, at least, have admitted them with the greatest Caution and Reserve. What follows from hence is clear, that Christianity must have been confined to the *Jews* chiefly, if not wholly; and the Means of Salvation (which were intended to be universal) have been drawn into so narrow a Compass, as not to be perfectly consistent with that super-eminent Goodness, which regards the universal Happiness of Mankind.

But, if Difficulties would have arisen from hence, to the then World, how much greater are those which must have fallen on the future Race of Mankind? Without a like efficacious Influence on all those to whom the Gospel should be preached, it would probably be admitted by none; the Presumptions against its Truth being such, on this Supposition, as were most likely to over-bear its Evidence.

To this Purpose, let me desire to know, by what Arguments are we most likely to
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win on the Unbeliever? Not merely from considering the real Effect, which the Preaching of *Christ*, and his Apostles, had on the first Ages, but the Effect which it reasonably ought to have: And therefore, what might be produced by an unseen, unaccountable Power, could be of small Use to us, in our present Debate with Infidels. Nay, so far could any Event of this kind be from serving us, that the Gentlemen on the other Side of the Question, would be apt to turn it against us; and to argue, that there could be no sufficient Evidence of Truth, where Men are supposed to be brought over by an irresistible Impulse.

Or, if they should pretend to question, whether the whole Scheme were not an artful Contrivance of the *Jews*, in order to unite themselves the more firmly, and to gain an Ascendant over the rest of the World, — by what Arguments could we, at this Distance, refute such Allegations? All we could say, would be this; our Adversaries ought to prove the Contrivance, before they allege it: To which they, in their Turn, would reply, that, considering the Condition of human Nature, it were impossible that this whole Body could think and act alike, had there not been some other Ground than the
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mere Force of Truth to unite them ; --- some present worldly Interest, by which Men are generally more affected, than by the distant Views of Things.

On the other hand, let us consider how the Matter stands, on the present State of Fact, as it is represented to us by the Historians of the Gospel. In these we find, that a great Part of the *Jews*, notwithstanding sufficient Evidence had been given them of our Blessed Lord's Authority, rejected him, --- whilst others of more equal Dispositions received him. The Character of the one Sort, discredits their Opposition ; --- of the other, gives Reputation to their Faith. The Reasons why the one rejected him, have been explained, and will appear to be no Arguments against Christianity : The Motives which induced others to believe, were most rational, and such as must have their Force for-ever. The One, though not influenced by the wonderful Facts, they either saw, or were at least assured of, yet had nothing to allege against the Truth of those Facts, --- or the Use of them as Evidences of the *Messiah* : The other, though at first labouring under Prejudices, yet, upon farther Examination, gave way to Proof, and confessed the Truth
they

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they could no longer resist. To be short; the One, fired with Rage, made Force supply the Place of Reason, and endeavoured by Persecutions to overbear that Truth, they were unable to refute;—whilst the Others, with an admirable Meekness and Courage, supported themselves under all these Storms, and gladly sacrificed their Lives, for the Defence and Confirmation of the Gospel. When these Things are laid together, it will appear, that the real Interests of Christianity have not been impaired by the early Opposition which was made to *Christ*. The Cause he was concerned in, however it might seem to suffer at first, gained real Strength by these Sufferings; the Wisdom of God having so ordered Matters, as to draw Good out of Evil, and to turn the Folly, and Wickedness, and Rage of Men, to his own most glorious Praise.

Having thus dispatched what I designed to offer on this Subject, I shall now make some proper Reflections on the Whole.

And first, we may judge from hence what are the real Causes of Infidelity, even in the present Age. The very same, or the like Causes which prevailed with the *Jews*, to reject the *Messias*, do still work, and indispose
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the Unbelievers of the present Times to receive him. It is not (as they would have it thought) either Want of Evidence originally afforded, or a Defect of it through Length of Time, — It is not this, I say, which holds them back; — but an entire Disregard to all Religion; — an Insensibility of all moral Obligation; — an Inattention to all just Reasoning on this Subject; — an Adherence to wrong Prejudices; and an entire Diffoluteness and Corruption of Manners: Where these prevail, nothing can be expected but an Aversion to Christianity. A Religion, which carries Matters so much farther than any other Scheme ever did, cannot expect to be admitted by those, who have no Liking to any Religion at all. What binds upon us moral Duties under the heaviest Penalties, cannot be agreeable to that Person, who hath no Sense of moral Obligation. What can be evinced only by Reason and Argument built on Facts, will have no Force with him, who gives himself no Trouble about Reason and Argument. What requires the greatest Openness, and Simplicity of Mind, whether to be understood or practised, will not be admitted by that Person, who is already given up to Prejudices: And that which exacts the greatest

Strictness

Strictness of Behaviour, and the most exalted Virtue, is unsuitable to the Taste of the Injurious, the Cruel, the Voluptuous : So that unless Men can be in some measure cured of these Evils, we have a poor Prospect of making any Impressions on them, by the external Evidence of the Gospel. An Honesty and Uprightness of Mind was necessary, in order to be influenced by the Miracles of Christ, wrought even in Mens own Presence : And surely the same Conditions which were requisite to the first Spreading of Christianity, are still needful to support and enlarge its Interests. But, as thoughtless, and prejudiced, and vicious, as too many Men are, yet still, I hope, the Interests of Religion will not be found desperate ; there being Ways still remaining of gaining an Access to them, though we are obliged to take a round-about Method, and to proceed more slowly.

To this Purpose, we shall find ourselves concerned to establish the first Principles and Obligations of Morality on the Foot of natural Reason ; to convince Men (if we can,) that they are accountable as well for the Conduct of the Understanding, as the Will ; --- that they are bound to attend to, and judge fairly of Arguments proposed ; --- to divest themselves
of

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of all unjust Prejudices :---But, above all, to act agreeably to Nature ; and this cannot be done, but by a strict Adherence to the Rules of Morality, as being founded entirely in Nature. If Men can be once brought to this, the Passage farther to Christianity will be easy and immediate : The Difficulties which prevented their Belief, will be removed : And when it is considered, how every genuine Principle of Nature is confirmed by *Christ*, and adopted into his Scheme ; ---how the Means and Motives to Virtue are supplied by it, ---our Ignorance enlightened, --- our Fears removed, --- and our best Hopes animated ;---it is scarce credible but he, who is once a sincere Theist, will soon be a good Christian.

What Turn Things may take in Time, cannot certainly be said ; for, we are no more secure of bringing Men to natural Religion, than of drawing them over immediately to the *Christian*. Yet it ministers some sort of Hope to reflect, that much useful Pains have been taken of late, to establish the Principles of natural Religion, on a rational and clear Foundation, --- and to make Matters of this Kind more easy and sure than they were formerly. Performances of this
Nature

Nature have, it seems, been received with Favour, and read with Pleasure; insomuch that it hath been reckoned somewhat unfashionable to be entirely a Stranger to them. It were, however, much to be wished, that such Writings made a somewhat deeper Impression on Mens Consciences; that they did not read merely for Reading sake, --- to gratify Curiosity, or to furnish out Matter for Conversation: For, so long as these are the sole Ends of Reading, we cannot expect any useful Effects from it. But, if it should happen that this Exercise of their Minds, in attending to Truth, should once affect them deeply, and work in them a real Sense of Virtue, we might then pronounce of them, that they *are not far from the Kingdom of God*; For, *If any Man will do his [i. e. the Father's] Will, he shall know of the Doctrine*, saith our Saviour, *whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

A Second Reflection I would offer, shall be this: As the Temper and Condition before-mentioned, must, in the Unbeliever, harden him against Conviction, so likewise, as far as it prevails in the Believer himself, it must unfit him for carrying on the Interests of Christianity, and make even his own Faith precarious.

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The Particulars before insisted on, as the main Causes of the *Jewish* Unbelief, were, Inattention, Prejudice, and Passion. Let us see then what Effect these must have on the Success and Conduct of the Believer.

If he be lazy and inattentive, and unwilling to enquire into the Force of Argument, ----- though his own Profession should be sufficiently secured, by the Prepossessions of Education, yet how can he hope for any Success from his Attempts on the Unbeliever? Can he expect, in the way of Argument, to gain over an Adversary, who knows not what the Force of Argument is, and hath little Reason to support him in his Professions, but this, "that Christianity first got Possession of his Mind?" ----- A Reason (such a one as it is) which the Unbeliever may possibly, in his Turn, alledge with equal Force and Success. It is plain therefore, such an indolent, unenquiring Person, is incapable of doing Service or Credit to his Profession; and it is well if he doth not create irreparable Mischief to that Cause he is concerned to support: For, where a Man, by neglecting to enquire, is unable to give a Reason of the Hope that is in him, his want of Skill, will, by the Adversaries of Religion, be imputed to some Defect in

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Religion itself, and that Point be reckoned indefensible, which the Person, who espoused it, is unable to maintain. No Wonder therefore is it, that St. *Peter* should so strongly inculcate it on the first Christians, that they should furnish themselves with all proper Arms for the Defence of their Faith, and be able to give every Man, who enquired of them, a Reason of their Hope.

Exhortations of this Kind are by no means superseded by Length of Time; nor hath the long Possession which Christianity hath held of this Part of the World, made it needless to enquire into its original Title. Bold Men have, of late Years especially, disputed its Right, and called upon those who acknowledge it, to make good its Pretensions. Since this is the Case, surely it becomes us, for the sake of our Religion, to review this Subject with Care; to put ourselves in a Condition to repel all Assaults,----and to defend most effectually that Cause, which if lost, I know nothing else worth preserving.

Let us consider, in the next place, what Effect Prejudice must have on the Believer, and how it must expose the Cause he maintains, to the Scoffs and Insults of the Infidel.

By Prejudice, I do not mean that particular kind

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kind of Prejudice, which affected the *Jews*, and induced them to reject the *Messias* (for this can have no Room in a Believer); but, I understand by it, Prejudice in a more general Sense; an Adherence, without and against Reason, to certain Points, the maintaining which may be turned to the Disadvantage of Religion.

We have Instances enough of this, in the Members of the Church of *Rome*; who, adhering to certain Points peculiar to that Church, seem incapable of prevailing with a rational Unbeliever. For, whilst they maintain with us, the general Truth of Christianity, they mix with it certain Points impossible to be true; and by affirming these with the same Confidence as they do the most unquestionable Truths, they weaken all the Proofs they alledge; and consequently, whatever they endeavour to build with one Hand, they do most effectually destroy with the other.

Thus Matters stand with the Members of the Church of *Rome*: And happy would it be for the Cause of Christianity, if no other Persons were ever found to fall into the like Error. But, so hath it proved in Fact, that Men mixing their own Prejudices with Gospel

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Truths, and placing them on the same Foot, have given Offence, not only to the uncorrupted Professors of *Christianity*, but to its very Enemies; and whilst they have occasioned Grief to the one, they have given no small Cause of Triumph to the other. For, though simple Truth will make its Way, with reasonable Men at least, whilst supported by its proper Evidence, yet Error, destructive of the common Principles of Reason, must prejudice Truth, by being too nearly united to it; and so the common Cause of Christianity suffer by human Prejudices and Prepossession. How much therefore are we all concerned to embrace the Truth in Simplicity, lest our own imprudent Mistakes should hurt our Cause, and disserve that Interest we would endeavour to support.

But, after all, the worst, and most mischievous Thing to the Cause of Christianity, is, a vicious and immoral Life in its Professors. This leads Unbelievers to think, that we are not in earnest in our Professions; and consequently, that we inculcate the Rules of Religion with no other Design, than to gain an Advantage over others, in our temporal Concerns: For this is certain, that he who really scruples Nothing, is an Over-match for those,

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those, who adhere strictly to the Rules of Virtue. This, I say, is the Conclusion, which Unbelievers are apt to make, from the Conduct of ill Christians. I cannot therefore but wonder at the Indiscretion of some very good Men, who have been pleased to aggravate the Errors of Christians, and to represent them to the World as much worse than they really are. What Use hath been made of Passages of this Kind, may be learnt from a late Enemy to Christianity, whose Writings are too well known to the World. But, as the Consequence drawn from hence, is by no means just, I shall take the Liberty to consider the Matter fairly.

Those who make Profession of the Christian Religion, are Men of like Passions with others; and Persons, who, though they retain an habitual Belief of Christianity, yet, upon account of human Frailty, may be betrayed into many Errors, and Indiscretions. I do not deny, but even these are inconsistent with their habitual Persuasions; yet, still we know in fact, that Men are rather governed by their present Sentiments, than their general Belief, ---and are so carried on by immediate Passion, as to have no Recourse to the settled Principles of Conduct. On any other

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Foot than this, we must charge the Whole of Mankind, even from the first Man to the last (Christ Jesus only excepted,) with thorough Hypocrisy, and an entire Disbelief of every Principle of Action. Now, if this be the Case, then the ill Conduct of professed Christians must be ascribed to some other Cause than secret Infidelity; to the Force of Passion, --- to Irresolution of Temper, --- and the Strength of present Temptations. These will account for the Effect in a much better Way; and especially when we consider, that some Persons, of a very exceptionable Character, have yet laid down their Lives for the sake of the Gospel.

I have One Thing farther to add. As Inattention, Prejudice and Passion, must unfit a Man for carrying on the Interests of Christianity with others, so likewise must they render even his own Faith precarious; because no Man can be secure of maintaining his own Faith, but by using the same Methods, which were at first proper to produce it. And I have already observed, in my Account of the *Jewish* Infidelity, that it was owing to the before-mentioned Causes.

What Firmness of Belief can be expected, where the reasonable Grounds of it are unknown;

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known ;---where Men will not examine into the Evidence before them ;---and owe their present Persuasion (if such it may be called) to the mere Example of their Predecessors? Such not having any Depth of Soil, the Word of God, just cast upon them, must immediately spring up and decay.

Where Men give themselves up to Prejudices, many of which are perhaps inconsistent with the general Faith they profess,---they will be easily disposed to quit that Faith, when it shall appear to be inconsistent with these Prejudices ; and especially, if, having never thoroughly enquired into the true Reasons of their Faith, they have nothing farther to alledge in its Defence, than they have in Favour of these Prejudices themselves : So that upon this View of Things it will appear, that to destroy the Simplicity of our Religion, doth most effectually subvert our Religion itself.

To give way to corrupt Appetites and Passions, and to permit them to get an entire Ascendant over us, must in Time overthrow that Faith which condemns them. There is an utter Inconsistency between the just Belief of a Christian, and the Practices of an ill Man, As often therefore, as he re-

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flects on these Practices, he must do it with Regret and Terror ;----with Self-condemnation for having acted ill, and fearful Apprehensions of that Punishment, which his Religion threatens. Well is it, if this Sense of Matters shall get the better, and bring him back to the Practice of that Duty he hath violated. But, if it shall happen that the Habit of Ill hath gotten the entire Mastery, it is natural to expect he will endeavour, either to bring his Religion to countenance his Vices, or to persuade himself out of that Religion with which they are irreconcilable. Either of these must in effect subvert his Faith ;----the latter, by destroying the very Profession of it,---the former, by substituting something else in its Room. This must, I say, be the natural Consequence in a Person, by present Profession a *Christian*, but persevering in a wicked Life. Nor can this Consequence be avoided, but by a thorough Inattention to all the Precepts of the Gospel :---A State altogether as bad as the former ; because, tho' it want the Form, it is yet a virtual Renunciation of Christianity.

Upon the whole then, and to conclude ; having seen the proper Causes of Unbelief, let all those, who abhor the Effect, abhor

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likewise these Causes. Let us be diligent and careful in all our religious Enquiries, that we may know as well the true Ground, as the Import and Extent of our Religion. Let us keep the Mind free from all those Prejudices and Prepossessions, which, where-ever they prevail, narrow and confine it, and render it unfit, as well for right Practice, as just Contemplation. Let us, lastly, to the Purity of our Faith, add the utmost Strictness of Conversation, and endeavour to make, every Day, some farther Improvement in Virtue. This, and This only, can secure us Comfort here, and a Reward hereafter.

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likewise these Causes. For as he observes
and careful in all our religious Practices, that
we may know as well the true Grounds of
the Import and Extent of our Religion, as
we keep the Word free from all those
deceits and prepossessions which, when
they prevail, narrow and confine it, and
render it empty as well as light. For as
the Constitution of the Church is the
Foundation of our Faith, and the ground of our
Obedience, and order, our duty
every Day, some farther Improvement in
Virtue. This and the only way to
Constitution, and the way and means

S E R M O N III.

The Excellency of P A T I E N C E.

JAMES i. 2, 3, 4:

*My Brethren, count it all Joy when ye fall
into divers Temptations ;*

*Knowing this, that the Tryal of your Faith
worketh Patience.*

*But let Patience have her perfect Work, that
ye may be perfect and entire, wanting
nothing.*

BY *Temptations* in the Text, we are to
understand the Tryals of Affliction.

And what Kinds of Affliction our
Apostle had more especially in view, may be
learnt from considering the Condition of those
Times, in which he wrote.

The Church of *Christ* was no sooner
planted, but its Interests were opposed both
by

by *Jews* and *Gentiles* ; they were jealous of its growing Power, and used every Method, whether of Craft or Force, to stop its Progress. Hence the Apostles and early Propagators of our Faith, were exercised with *cruel Mockings and Scourgings* ; *yea, moreover with Bonds and Imprisonment* ; and Matters were carried so far, that there was no maintaining their Religion, but with the Hazard, at least, of Life.

These then are the Temptations which our Apostle had principally in View.---Abundant Tryals both of Mens Constancy and Sincerity ! and such as, bearing so very hard on human Nature, needed all the Aids as well of Religion as Reason, to support Men in enduring them.

Yet our Apostle was so far from being discouraged by these difficult Circumstances, that he even triumphed in the Consideration ; and exhorts Christians not merely to suffer, but to *rejoice* in their Sufferings. *My Brethren*, saith he, *count it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations.*

But what, may some say ;---are Afflictions then real Matter of Choice ? Is Pain itself a Good ? or, can we really please and delight ourselves in those Circumstances which Nature
itself

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itself abhors?—This we dare by no means affirm, and common Sense forbids it.— But, we must observe however, that Things are sometimes chosen, not so much upon their own Account, as the Reference they have to somewhat else. What is Evil, whilst considered separately from all the Consequences attending it, may be good, when it is the Means towards procuring some worthy End; and Pain itself is what a wise Man would chuse readily, when it leads the Way to a greater and more enduring Pleasure.

With reference to the present Case of Persecution or Affliction, for the Cause of Christ, St. Paul in his Epistle to the *Hebrews* represents it under the Notion of Discipline: *Ye have forgotten the Exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto Children; My Son, despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth [Heb. xii. 5, 6.].* It is in much the same View St. James treats it, in the Words before us: *My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Temptations: Knowing this, that the Tryal of your Faith worketh Patience: But, let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and*

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and entire, wanting nothing. Afflictions then afford Room and Exercise for an admirable Virtue : As they are the Tryals of our Faith, so do they give Occasions for our Patience : They lead us on (however rugged the Way may seem) to Glory in the Conclusion ; and prepare us for those Rewards, which will amply recompense the Difficulties of obtaining them.

This, I affirm, is eminently true, where Men suffer Affliction for the Cause of Christ, and in Support of his Religion. But, this is a Circumstance not so much in present View. The true Christian Faith is established by the Laws ; and those Powers are now engaged in its Defence, which were once employed for its Destruction. Yet still there is Calamity enough in Life, and Room left for the Exercise of Patience. The Evil of every Day is sufficient ; nor can we bear up against it, but by Fortitude and Constancy : Our very Joys are broken and interrupted ; and our Distresses are so frequent and sharp, that we scarce know how to support ourselves under them :----And yet, born that must be, which cannot be avoided by us. The Will of God must be submitted to by his Creatures, both in the ordinary Dispensations of Providence,
and

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and the more eminent Exercise of its Power. Patience then will come in as a necessary Duty in common Life. We need it almost every Day, on some Occasion or other; and therefore should arm ourselves with such Principles, as may enable us to go through with Innocence.

In my present Discourse on this Subject, I shall,

- I. Represent the great Excellency and Importance of the Virtue; and then,
- II. Propose such farther Reasons and Motives, as may serve to enforce it on us.

In representing the Excellency and Importance of this Virtue, I shall confine myself to what the Apostle in the Text suggests. He observes, that Afflictions are *the Tryals of our Faith*: They are the Means whereby it is discovered, whether a Man entertains an inward and real Sense of what he outwardly professes to believe. And if it be farther enquired, How, and in What way, this End may be attained by them, the Answer is obvious; viz. By the Fortitude and Constancy with which we bear them.

Let us consider the Case, with respect to those who suffer Persecution for the Faith of Christ.

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Christ. Barely to make Profession of this Faith, can be esteemed no sufficient Evidence of Men's Sincerity : If it were, there would be no Difference between the Pretences of the Impostor, and the artless Truth of the Believer. But when Men declare those Sentiments, which they are bold enough to support against the Rage of Persecution;---when they take patiently the Loss of Reputation and Fortune, and in Defence of their Faith, can dare even Death itself, then we are sure they have not imposed either on the World or themselves : Then it appears beyond Contradiction, that they were seriously persuaded of those Truths, which they have asserted with so much Courage, and defended with so much Constancy.

On the other hand, should it happen, that Men shrink back in the Day of Tryal ; that having made Profession of their Faith in Christ, whilst it was safe to do so, they yet desert it, when Persecution threatens, or Affliction bears hard upon them,---how does it appear that they really believed the Truths which they professed ? What other could a secret Infidel do, than draw back when it is dangerous to advance farther ; and, instead of supporting a persecuted Faith, either openly deny,

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deny, or silently betray it? Men are very apt to deceive and impose even on themselves: They fancy they believe what they are really very indifferent about; and what they have taken so little Care to settle in their Minds, that the first Shock proves it rather to be a weak Opinion, than a firm and well-grounded Faith. Afflictions, in such Cases, shew Men to themselves. Then they learn (what nothing else could have taught them) that there is a vast Difference between a settled Persuasion, and an hasty and over-forward Profession; and that nothing can prove the Sincerity of their Faith, but a resolute enduring of those Afflictions, which this Faith shall bring upon them.

But, not to rest on this (which, as I said before, is a Case extraordinary, and a Circumstance from which we are now free),---let us take a Step farther; and consider, that *Patience*, even in the ordinary Concerns of Life, is the best Evidence of our real Faith.

By Faith, I do here understand, not only a Belief of Religion in the general, and that Jesus Christ was the Messias,---but likewise a firm Persuasion of the several Truths which he came to teach us:---More especially, that God exercises a just, and wise, and kind

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Providence over us; that he directs our Affairs, and observes our Actions; and will hereafter render to every Man according to his Works. The Consideration of these Things (if we are really possessed with a deep Sense of them) will teach us to put our Trust in God;---to accept his Blessings with Gratitude, and to use them with Moderation;---to bear his Judgments without Murmur;---to rely on him for Support; and to rest assured, that if we must suffer Affliction, *God's Judgments are right, and that he in Faithfulness hath caused us to be troubled.* To act in this manner, is what we mean by Patience. Now if Patience be the real Effect and Consequence of Faith, it must, at the same time, be the surest Proof of it. There is an inseparable Connexion between the Cause and the Effect; so that as on the one hand we reckon upon Consequences, where the known Ground and Reason of them appears, so on the other, by the apparent Consequences of Things, we are carried back to their proper Causes. And therefore, if Patience under the Evils of Life be the genuine Fruit of a true and lively Faith, it is certain that where-ever it subsists, it is abundant Evidence of that Faith from which it flows.

Or,

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Or, if it should be said on this Occasion, that natural Courage, and the Precepts of Philosophy, may support Men, without building on the Principles of Religion,—we may confute this Notion by Fact and Experience. Who ever supported himself sufficiently under the Evils of this Life, without the Hopes of a better? And, however bravely some have talked of Afflictions, and pretended to triumph over those Misfortunes they never felt,—yet the Day of Calamity hath given them another Sense of Things. Then they have perceived, that merely human Considerations are not enough; and that nothing can give Men Comfort under the Distresses of Life, but a Confidence in the All-Good Being.

Upon the whole then, and to close this Argument; if Faith itself be of any Consequence to us (as surely it is), then whatsoever is a Proof and Evidence of this Faith, must be truly valuable: And since Patience under Afflictions, as well common as extraordinary, affords this Evidence, so we cannot but give it a Place amongst the first and most excellent Graces.

Besides this, there is another Consideration here suggested by the Apostle. He ex-

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horts us to let *Patience have her perfect Work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* The Force of the Argument consists in this, that where we practise this Virtue in those Degrees, to which it may and ought to be carried, there every other Virtue must fall in of course: For this we may be assured of, that the truly patient will always be a truly good Man. As therefore under the former Argument it was shewn, that *Patience is the best Evidence of our Faith, so I shall here endeavour to prove, that it is, in like manner, the best Testimony of Virtue.*

The main Principle into which we must resolve it, as its Cause, is (as I said before) a vigorous and lively Faith. *This, saith St. John, is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.* Now the same Principle from which *Patience* itself proceeds, and which teaches us to overcome the Calamities of Life, will be equally fruitful of every other Virtue.

It is a frequent Observation, that there is a Connexion between the several Virtues of a good Life; so that it can scarce be supposed a Man is eminent for One, and notoriously deficient in Others. This Advantage *Patience* hath in common with every other assignable Virtue;

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Virtue; with this Difference however, that as it requires a more strong and vigorous Faith as its Cause, and is more closely connected with Duty in general,---so the Remark will hold in a more especial manner here.

A Man may be said indeed in some Sense to believe those Points, which having been once considered by him, did then approve themselves to his Mind,---and against which, nothing hath since appeared sufficient to overthrow them. Faith improved no more than this, will not carry us through in the Day of Tryal.---For this Purpose it is requisite that we frequently attend to, and consider over such Matters anew;---that we make them familiar to our Minds, and produce in ourselves a quick and lively Sense of them. When Things are carried so far, our Minds will be fortified with the best and most useful Principles: We shall be able to bear the Shock of the greatest Calamities; and, by the Assistance of Divine Grace, to conquer them. But, the same Faith which conquers the Difficulties of Affliction, will enable us to get the better of every thing else. Under the Influence of Faith we shall be content with our own; moderate in our Desires;

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temperate in our Enjoyments; just in our Dealings; and charitable to the Distressed: Above all, we shall be warm and earnest in our Prayers to God, and joyful in every Acknowledgement of his Favour. Each of these Virtues doth as necessarily flow from a lively Faith, as Patience itself doth: And, consequently, as *Patience* cannot subsist without *Faith*,---nor a *lively Faith* without the Virtues of a good Life, we may rest assured, that where *Patience* hath her perfect Work, we shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Yet this is not all; we may consider the Argument in another View, and prove the close Connexion between this, and the several other Virtues, in a way still more plain and indisputable.

I have said before, that Patience cannot subsist, unless it be founded in a vigorous and lively Faith, *i. e.* a full Persuasion, amongst several other Articles, that God is righteous, and wise, and good;---that he exercises a Providence over us; and will finally reward every Man according to his Works. But what Comfort can all this administer, if we are conscious to ourselves of an irregular and vicious Life? If we believe that God is righteous, we must believe withal that he cannot

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cannot approve the Unrighteous : If he is wise, he must make a proper Distinction between *him who serveth him, and him who serveth him not* : If he is good, he must abhor the Oppressor : If there be a Providence, God cannot act otherwise than with a due Regard to Men's moral Qualifications : And if we believe, and are firmly persuaded of a future State, how can we do otherwise than prepare ourselves for it by the sincere Practice of Virtue ? The Faith I am speaking of, and from which Patience flows, is not an unaccountable Persuasion that we are the Favourites of God, and destined to Happiness, whether we will or no. It implies a firm Reliance on God, upon this Condition only, that we approve ourselves in his Sight : And consequently, whilst we are conscious of carelessly neglecting, or of obstinately withstanding his Will, this Faith must fill us with Horror.

When the Calamities of Life bear hard upon us, how can we take Refuge in a God whom we have provoked ; or expect from him either the Assistance of his Grace to support, or the Assurances of a Reward to comfort us ? Men, in such a Case, will rather be apt to consider the Afflictions they endure,

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as the Arrows of the Almighty. To such Persons they must appear as the Marks of Displeasure; and of a Displeasure too, which must bear so much the more hard upon them, because they have foolishly brought it upon themselves. A wicked Man cannot be truly patient. There are no Principles which can sufficiently support us under Circumstances of Difficulty, but a Confidence in God,---in whom we can place no Confidence, whilst we disobey and affront him: So that in this View, the Connexion between Patience and the Virtues of a good Life, is manifest. For, if nothing can give us a comfortable Faith, but Virtue; and nothing can produce Patience, but such a Faith as we can recur to with Satisfaction,----then it is certain, that where Patience is, there the Consciousness of Virtue must subsist likewise.

But what, may some say,---is every good Man able to bear Affliction?---and must every bad Man immediately sink under it? This is contrary to known Fact, and daily Experience.

Here then Allowances must be made for natural Temper and Constitution. An ill Habit of Body, or Want of Spirits, may lay a good Man under mighty Disadvantages;---
may

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may give Force to the Calamities he labours under, and render the Exercise of his Patience more difficult. Yet, the more difficult it may be to get the better of Affliction, the more illustrious will be the Conquest: And, if a Man heartily labours to discharge his Duty, the same God who will reward, will likewise assist him in it. I deny not but different Men, in several Circumstances, may make a different Progress, and practise this Virtue in various Degrees of Perfection. But there is no truly good Man, who may not bear up in some Degree; and we have a Divine Promise, *that no Man shall be tempted above what he is able; but God will with the Temptation make a way to escape, that he may be able to bear it.*

So again, on the other hand, a Man void of Virtue, may have a Hardiness of Temper,—and Constitution may bear him somewhat out in Suffering. The appearing Resolution of such a Person, is not properly owing to Fortitude, but Insensibility. The Man hath a less quick Perception than others have; and therefore is thought to bear Afflictions better. But, let us consider him as labouring under those Distresses, which evidently affect him:—This is the proper View: Will he then appear

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appear to have a just Firmness and Constancy of Mind? This is plainly impossible. He hath no sufficient Principles on which to build. His Reason (if he recurs to that) is armed against him; and his God must appear with Terror. In a word, he cannot but sink under those Misfortunes, he is unable to remove. I pass on now to my

Second general Head; *viz.* To propose such farther Reasons and Motives, as may serve to enforce this Duty. To this Purpose let us observe,

1. That we receive Good from the Hand of God; and therefore ought to bear the several Evils which he inflicts.

2. That the Good we have received from him, we have no Claim to; but the Evils which we suffer, we have strictly and properly deserved. And,

Lastly, that these Evils themselves, if we suffer them in a becoming Manner, will conduce to our most important Interests.

It was the Return which *Job* made, when tempted to curse God and die, *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil?* He remembered the several prosperous Years, which had passed over him; and he knew by whose Providence they had

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had been prosperous. Surely there was a Debt of Gratitude owing on this Account, which it became him, as far as possible, to answer. This he considered thoroughly; and therefore, instead of any impatient Murmuring at his present Sufferings, he resigned himself up entirely to God, and blessed the very Hand under which he suffered.

If the Example of this great Man, who is so highly celebrated in holy Writ, be of any Moment, we may apply it in some measure to every other Person who labours under Affliction. For though it may not be frequent to be so highly favoured by Providence, as this great Man had been in his more early Years,—yet who is there, who hath enjoyed nothing, and received no Advantages from the Influence of Heaven?

Even Life itself, is something: The Blessing of Health and Vigour is something; and the Use of Reason is still something better:—Nor are these valuable merely on their own Account. They have been,—or might have been, had we so pleased, directed to noble Ends,—the obtaining some Portion of Happiness, both future and present.

Over and above this, have not almost all Men, in a greater or less Degree, enjoyed the

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Comforts and Conveniencies of Life?—The Advantages of Fortune,—or Success in their Affairs,—or the Support of Friends? And are not all these owing to the Bounty of Providence?

What then, if, after all, our Course of Prosperity be somewhat interrupted? What, if Misfortunes happen,—or Disease impairs us,—or any other evil Accidents break in upon us? Shall our present Sufferings abate our Thankfulness for past Enjoyments? If we are truly thankful for the One, why do we murmur under the Other? And why should we not think, that an All-good Being is equally gracious in his Judgments, and in his Blessings?

We should consider, that God is the supreme Judge and Director of the World: As such he rules us with an even and unerring Hand,—and in such a Manner, as to produce upon the Whole the greatest Quantity of Happiness which can be properly produced in the present State of Things. This I may conclude, from considering the Nature and Perfections of God. Now, if this be true, then how are we sure, but the very Afflictions we labour under for the present, may really be the Means of some greater Happiness

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ness to others? How do we know, but the very Advantages we enjoyed formerly, were built on a like suffering Condition in other Men? And if we ourselves have reaped Profit from the Misfortunes of others,----ought we to murmur, when it comes to us to be profitable in our Turn, and to contribute our Share toward the common Service of Mankind?

In some Instances this Point is manifest; and though it be not quite so clear in most others,---yet we should remember, that the Frame of Nature is too vast to be comprehended by us. It consists of numberless Parts, whose Connexion and Dependence on each other is to us unknown. And therefore, if the present Management of Things, may, in some Cases, seem hard to be accounted for in a human Way of Thinking, yet we should rest assured, that were the Whole laid open to us, these Difficulties would clear up at once; and we should see, that we could not enjoy so much Happiness as we do, without the present Mixture of Misfortune.

2. I shall pass to my Second Reason, which was this; The Good we have received from God, we have no Claim to; but the Evils which we suffer, we have strictly and properly deserved.

It

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It is certain, there lay no original Obligation on God, to create Mankind at all, much less to assign him any particular Degrees of Happiness. His Justice therefore must be entirely acquitted, if his Enjoyments and Sufferings should but balance each other, and no Man, without his own Fault, be miserable. In consequence of this, whatever is bestowed on any one beyond the Measure of his Sufferings, must be the Effect of pure Goodness; and which must rather be received with Thankfulness, than claimed as due.

Our Title, I say, to the Blessings of Life, cannot be stronger than our Title to Life itself; which being resolveable into the good Pleasure of God, our Happiness likewise must be built on the same Foundation. And accordingly, the Holy Scriptures constantly inculcate the Dependency of human Condition, the Want of any essential and inherent Merit, — and the Impossibility of doing any thing which can strictly deserve the Blessings of Providence. *Can a Man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself?*

Well then; since all we enjoy is entirely owing to the Bounty of God, and what we receive

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receive of mere Grace,—doth it become us to prescribe to him?—To complain that he doth not bestow more upon us;—or that he withdraws the Blessings he once permitted freely? Yet, this is truly the Case with regard to many Men, who reckon themselves unfortunate; and whose Afflictions arise from nothing else, but the Absence of something they could wish, or the Loss of something they have enjoyed.

To carry the Matter farther: Let us suppose, that the Sufferings Men labour under are *positive* Evils, and such as may be properly set against the Goods they have enjoyed;—yet still, if these Goods themselves were the mere Fruits of Bounty,—and if the Evils suffered be not sufficient to balance these Enjoyments;—there will still remain an Overplus of certain Degrees of Happiness, to which we have no manner of Claim. For these we are concerned to return our Thanks, and not complain that our Happiness is mixt. We should carefully set the one against the other; and learn to bear the lesser Evils patiently, if for no other Reason, yet for this at least, that we are still left in Possession of a greater and more substantial Good.

The Argument I am upon will receive
greater

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greater Strength, when it is considered, that these very Evils we suffer, we have foolishly brought upon ourselves, either as the natural Consequences of our Imprudence, or as the judicial Punishments of our Sins.

Sometimes a Man involves himself in Difficulties by his own Want of Thought,---by his heedless and indiscreet Conduct. In such a Case he deserves what he suffers ; for Providence is not concerned to prevent those Evils he would not avoid. Every Man should act with common Prudence at least ; Or, if he fails in this, should consider the Afflictions consequent upon it, as so many Instructions to behave more discreetly for the future.

But, without taking This into the Account, there is another Foot on which we may argue the Demerit of Mankind, viz. the general Corruption of our Nature. All Men fall short of the Glory of God : And, if they do not in the greater Instances offend grossly, yet their very best Actions are defective. In this View they cannot approve themselves entirely to an All-righteous Being ;---to One, who is *of purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity.* If then they suffer on this Account, can they reasonably complain ;---they, who have deserved so much more to suffer ? Rather they should

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should humble themselves under the Hand of Providence, and learn to glorify that God in their Afflictions, whom they have not sufficiently honoured in their Lives.

But, if this be the Case even of the best Men, what Judgment shall we pass on those, whose Offences have been more provoking? To murmur under such Circumstances, is to double their Crimes, and thereby to increase the Miseries they complain of.

3. To what hath been said, I shall add in the last place, That the Evils which we suffer, if we suffer them in a becoming Manner, will conduce to our most important Interests.

I shall not here insist (though I might do it properly) on the good Use we may make of our Afflictions, in our temporal Concerns, should we take Occasion from hence of altering any mistaken Measures,—or of gaining such a Firmness, as may set us above any Difficulties whatsoever. What I design to suggest hath a more immediate Reference to the Supreme Being, by whose Direction, or Permission at least, these Afflictions are brought upon us. To submit therefore to them, and to bear them as we ought, cannot fail of rendering us acceptable to God,

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and of securing to us all that Happiness which follows such a State.

The Discipline may indeed be severe (as it sometimes is, no doubt); yet still we should remember, that in this Case, it proves but Discipline,—the Chastisement of a tender and affectionate Parent, who pities at the same time that he afflicts us. God sees our spiritual Wants, and applies the Remedies these Wants require; which, though rough, are not the less necessary. The resigning ourselves therefore up to his Will, as it acknowledges his wise Care, is not only in itself proper, but recommends us to his farther Care. Upon such a Foot, the Discipline, we may be certain, will not be heavier than we have Abilities to bear: Or, if it should happen to press too hard upon us, God will support us by the Aids of Grace. That which he designs for a noble End, shall be so ordered, as to attain that End, if we are not wanting to ourselves. The Infirmities of Nature will be strengthened by the Assistance of the Spirit,—and the good Man enabled, not barely to bear Afflictions, but to triumph over them.

What Comfort may we draw to this Purpose, from considering the Afflictions of the early Christians, and the Bravery with which they

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they bare them. They were neither terrified by the Prospect of the Evils threatened, nor overcome by the Sense of them, even whilst they suffered. They wearied out their very Persecutors themselves, and (as it is expressed in Scripture) *rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer*. So much greater *was He* who animated and supported them, *than he who was in the World!*

But, the great Point, and that which ought to influence us beyond all other Considerations, is still behind; —I mean, the Security of a future Inheritance, and those Additions of Reward, to which a Resignation to the Divine Will must entitle us. A good and merciful God, who afflicts us for Good, will not desert us at the last; and if he sees fit, to answer the great Ends of his Providence, not to remove our Afflictions, he will reward us for enduring them. Nay, if the Degrees of future Recompence, shall be proportioned to the Degrees of our Improvement in Virtue, he who hath attained to that excellent State of submitting himself entirely to God's Will, cannot fail of being distinguished. His Reward in Heaven shall be great; and the very Remembrance of what he once suffered shall be sweet to him.

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To close this Discourse; let no Man either be dejected under the Sense of Evils present, or too solicitous about those which shall or may happen to him. Whilst we are under the Eye of a kind Providence, all things will turn out for the best at last, if we do not, by our own wrong Conduct, prevent its gracious Designs. Into God's Hands therefore let us commit ourselves, as into the Hands of a merciful Creator,—who will make Allowances for the Weakness of our Condition, and *who remembers that we are but Dust.*

Now to God the Father, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-

S E R M O N I V.
The History of J O S E P H.
I N T H R E E P A R T S.

P A R T I.

G E N. xxxvii. 36.

*And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto
Potiphar, an Officer of Pharaoh's, and
Captain of the Guard.*

IT is observeable that a great Part of that
Wisdom, whereby one Man is distin-
guished from another, is owing to Ex-
perience, and an Acquaintance with those
Things which surround us. By reflecting
on what hath happened to ourselves in the
different Parts of Life, and on the Conduct

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and Fortunes of other Men, we learn to think and judge properly ; to guess at the Consequences of Things; and to regulate our own Actions and Behaviour.

This makes the Study of History , and an Acquaintance with what hath happened in former Ages, of singular Use and Advantage ; and therefore the Sacred Writings, at the same time that they deliver to us the general Rules of Life, furnish us with several memorable Accounts, of the Lives and Actions of Men. By these may we illustrate the particular Rules of Duty ; and seeing either the Success or Miscarriages of former Times, direct our Behaviour in such a manner, as to obtain the Advantages in which They have gone before us, and avoid those Difficulties with which They have encountered.

In this respect, the History of the Bible far exceeds the Accounts delivered to us by other Writers. The Stories there recorded are short, clear and full ; abounding with Variety of useful Matter, and suitable to all the Circumstances of Life ; insomuch that there is hardly any one Point, but what may be learnt by a due Attention to the several Histories in the Sacred Writings.

I have

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I have chosen to treat at present concerning the History of *Joseph*; in which we shall find as great a Variety, as may be met with in the Accounts of any single Person whatsoever: The most surprising Changes of Fortune, and yet a Mind capable of bearing any Fortune; neither insolent in Prosperity, nor dejected in Adversity. Add to this, that the Wisdom and Goodness of Divine Providence are wonderfully seen in the History I am treating of: The greatest Difficulties are cleared up by the Event; and the Judgments of God, which to careless Observers seem harsh and severe, are here shewn to be mercifully intended, and the surest Ways to some signal future Advantage.

The first Observeable which I would set before you in the History of *Joseph*, is this: That he was *Jacob's* favourite Son. We are told in the Third Verse of this Chapter, that *Israel loved Joseph more than all his Children.*

This possibly might be owing to a certain Weakness, to which all Parents are in some degree liable; and which even good Men cannot always conquer. There is often no real Ground or Foundation for preferring one Child before another: The natural Relation is the same to all; and therefore one

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might be apt to expect that the natural Affection should be so too. Yet, I say, in fact we find it otherwise: There are, and always will be, Darlings and Favourites: And though we should ascribe this to an unaccountable Sort of Weakness in Parents, yet it may the more easily be pardoned, if we consider, that every Man is, through all Life, liable to somewhat of this kind. Our Liking and Affection towards particular Persons, is often founded on something as unaccountable. We prefer some before others, who are perhaps much more deserving: And every one knows that Esteem and Love do not always bear the same Proportion.

However, though such a partial Affection is in some Sense unavoidable,—yet still it may, and ought to be kept within certain Bounds. To express (and that publicly and frequently too) an over-great Fondness for a particular Child, may be of the worst Consequence. It is apt to make him too presumptuous; and to discourage, in a high Degree, other Children, who are extremely desirous of approving themselves, and of being acceptable to their Parents:—And however this be, it certainly creates a Distaste and Aversion towards the Favourite himself; so
that

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that he really loses in the Regards of others, more than he gains in the Fondness of his Parent. We have an Instance of this in the Story before us. *Jacob* had distinguished this favourite Son by a particular Habit; *he made him a Coat of many Colours*. This surely was carrying the Point by much too far. Out of regard to *Joseph* himself, he should have forbore to give such open Marks of Partiality; and such as could scarce fail of drawing on him the Envy and Hatred of his Brethren. Thus it proved in fact: *For when his Brethren saw that their Father loved him more than all his Brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him*. They hated him to such a Degree, that it broke forth in rude and uncivil Words; such, as they would hardly use towards any other Person. This Behaviour is by no means to be justified: For what Injury had *Joseph* done them? If he had engrossed the Favour of his Father, yet this was no more than what each of them would themselves have been fond of: They ought not therefore, in Strictness of Reason, to hate him at all; and much less to break out into such Rudenesses and Incivilities, as could not but grieve their aged Father himself.

We shall find this Aversion to be farther
heightened

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heightened by Occasion of Two Dreams, which appeared to foretell the Dominion that *Joseph* should in future Time have over his Brethren. For thus we are informed v. 5. *And Joseph dreamed a Dream; and he told it to his Brethren; and they hated him yet more.*

It will be proper, before I proceed, to note somewhat concerning the Nature and Use of these extraordinary Dreams; not only as it will serve to introduce this Part of the Story, but also, because the main Circumstances of *Joseph's* Fortune, turned on his Skill in interpreting Dreams.

We should observe therefore, that in the early Ages of the World, before there was vouchsafed to Men any standing Revelation of God's Will, he was pleased to manifest himself in an extraordinary Manner to particular Persons; either to signify to them, what he required to be doné by them; or else, by foreshewing some future Events, to keep up a lively Sense of his Providence over Mankind.

These Manifestations were made in different Manners (as there are infinite Ways in which God is able to make himself known to his Creatures). But the present Occasion obliges me to take Notice of this Method by
Dreams;

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Dreams; in which the Point intended to be made known, was either exprefly fignified; —or elfe fhadowed forth by fuch Representations and Emblems, as might be a fufficient Intimation of the thing intended to be revealed. Thefe Emblems, in like manner, were fometimes fo exceedingly plain and clear, that the Meaning of them was immediately apprehended by every one who heard of them: At other Times they were more remote and difficult to be underftood; —fo difficult, that perhaps the Perfon to whom the Dream was vouchsafed, was himfelf an entire Stranger to its Meaning. In this Cafe Providence fo ordered it, that there was always fome one or other in the Way, to whom the Gift of interpreting Dreams was vouchsafed. Of this we have Inftances in the feveral Dreams of *Pharaoh's* Butler and Baker, and at length of *Pharaoh's* own Dreams; which were interpreted by *Joseph*, and the Meaning juftified by the Accomplifhment.

Of thofe Dreams which were fo plain and clear, that no one could miftake their Meaning, we have an Inftance in the Cafe now before us. *Hear, faith Joseph to his Brethren (v. 6, 7.) The Dream which I have dreamed. Behold we were binding Sheaves in*

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the Field : And, lo ! my Sheaf arose, and it stood upright : And, behold ! your Sheaves stood round about, and made Obeysance to my Sheaf. The Meaning was in this Case too obvious to be mistaken. His Brethren immediately apprehended it, and said, *Shalt thou indeed reign over us ? And they hated him the more for his Words.* To much the same Purpose was the next Manifestation, which God made to him by Dream : *Bekold the Sun, and the Moon, and the Eleven Stars made Obeysance to me.* This indeed included his Father and Mother in the same State of Dependence on him, as his Brethren. Thus it was understood, and afterwards in fact verified, when the whole Family of *Jacob* were supported by him in *Egypt*.

It is remarkable indeed, in reference to this latter Dream, that *Jacob* his Father rebuked him ; and the more so, because the good Man plainly saw that these were supernatural Intimations, and Manifestations of the Will of God ; for we are afterward told, v. 11. that *his Father observed the Saying*.---What Occasion then could there be for *Jacob* to rebuke his Son, in such a Case as this ? Could he be blamed for being favoured in so singular a Manner by God himself ?—By no means :

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means : But we shall see the Ground of this Behaviour of *Jacob*, if we consider that young Persons are too apt to grow vain and proud of any Advantages which they enjoy beyond other Men. This is a Fault to which Youth is especially exposed ; and therefore, we may consider this Conduct of *Jacob* as none other, than a Caution against Vanity and Presumption : A Caution so much the more necessary, as the Dream represented to him his future Greatness, and the Dependence of his very Parents themselves upon him.

To proceed with the History.—The Brethren of *Joseph*, who were so exceedingly offended with him, having been, after this, appointed to manage their Father's Affairs in a distant Place, the tender Parent dispatches this his favourite Son *Joseph*, *to see whether it were well with his Brethren and their Flocks*. He readily obeyed, without making any Excuses ; as he reasonably might have done, since he could not but be aware of their deep Displeasure against him.—He proceeds in his Journey, supported only by his own Innocence, and the Sense of God's Favour.

A Person who came on so kind and friendly an Errand, and was dispatched hither by their Father himself, ought indeed to have met

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met with the kindest Reception. But we see it proved otherwise in fact: *For when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.* See in this Instance the sad Consequences of giving way to Anger ! At first perhaps the Displeasure which they conceived against their Brother was moderate, and such as might be pardoned in Persons so liable to Error as Men are. But then, the first cool Reflections ought to have checked these Resentments, and have reduced them to a better Temper. Instead of this, we see they laid hold of every Opportunity to keep up, and even to heighten their Passion : They rose from one Degree to another ; till at length they deliberated about the Commission of an Action, which in former Times they could not have thought on without Horror. They conspired together to slay their Brother ;—to commit Murder,—a Crime abhorred both by God and Man ; and this upon so near a Relation as a Brother, whose Life they ought to have defended at the Hazard of their own ;—and at a Time too, when he was performing towards them an Act of brotherly Love, and bringing a tender Message from their Father.

This

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This Opportunity however they embraced, as being most likely to prevent Discovery. He was now at a Distance from his Father, and entirely in their Power : They propose therefore *to slay him, and to cast him into a Pit, and to say, some evil Beast hath devoured him.* The Remark I would make on this, is, that their Malice was sedate and deliberate : They contrive as well for their own Security, as the Destruction of their Brother : And the Reason of this Malice is immediately assigned,---*viz. — we shall see what will become of his Dreams.* Their Pride, it seems, could not bear that *Joseph*, their younger Brother, should in Time become their Superior. They resolve therefore to falsify this Prediction ; and to prevent, though in a barbarous Manner, the Accomplishment of a Dream, which they could not hear without Indignation.

But vain is it for Man to strive with his Maker. If God hath determined that a particular Event shall come to pass, the very Opposition which Men endeavour to give, shall turn to their Confusion,—or perhaps promote that very Thing they desire to hinder. *Reuben* (who, as far as we can discover, was as much displeased with *Joseph* as the rest of his Brethren) on a sudden conceived

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ceived Sentiments of Pity and Compassion. He could not bear the Thought of laying violent Hands on his Brother : No doubt but a higher Power influenced his Mind, and determined him to more moderate Measures. *Let us shed no Blood*, saith he, — *but let us cast him into this Pit, and lay no Hand upon him.* This Method he proposed, as the fittest he could think of to divert his Brethren from their wicked Purpose. If they were stopped in executing their present Rage, he knew not but they might relent hereafter. Few Men approve in their cool and sober Hours, what they resolve on when they are out of Temper : And therefore he imagined his Brethren (who had not thrown off all Sense of Humanity) might at length be touched with the same kind of Compassion, which he felt, and be induced to deliver *Joseph* from that Danger, to which they had exposed him :— Or, at least, some Method might be contrived for the Relief of his Brother.—That this was his Intention in the Advice proposed, we are informed in this History : for we are told, that he did this *in order to rid him out of their Hands, and to deliver him to his Father again*, v. 22.

Reuben's Advice succeeded. As soon as
Joseph

Joseph came to them, they laid Hands upon him, stripped him of his Garment, which had formerly given them so great Offence,--- and cast him into the Pit.-----Were we to proceed no farther in this History, we might think the Case of *Joseph* to have been truly desperate.----But the Ways of Providence are dark, and to us unsearchable, till they are cleared up by the Event of Things. Means, to us unlikely, are applied by God to bring about the most important Ends: And it is sometimes seen, that Adversity itself is the directest Way to Happiness. Thus it proved in the Case of *Joseph*. The Event I am speaking of, which seemed to threaten unavoidable Death, was the Foundation on which all the future Fortunes of his Life were built. This we shall see, as we proceed in this History, and consider what immediately followed upon this Occurrence.

Joseph's Brethren, having advanced thus far in the horrid Fact they had resolved upon, at length sat down to refresh themselves,---- or, as it is expressed, *to eat Bread*. But whilst they were eating, a Company of *Ishmaelitic* Travellers passed by, who were going down to *Egypt*: This Accident suggested to *Judah* a Proposal, which he immediately offered to

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his Brethren; viz. To sell *Joseph* to the *Ishmaelites*, and so to avoid the Guilt of having murdered their own Brother. As I noted just before, when the Heat of Passion is over, Men are apt to cool, and to enter upon more moderate Measures. He began to reason with himself, *What Profit is it if we slay our Brother, and conceal his Blood?* ver. 26.--*Let not our Hand be upon him; he is our Brother, and our Flesh.* Happy was it for them that they stopped in Season: This Opportunity of Recollection saved them from the Guilt of Murder: However, it was not sufficient entirely to get the better of their Resentments. Though they saved *Joseph's* Life, they yet sold him to the *Ishmaelites*, who carried him away into Egypt.

I cannot but remark as I go along, that *Reuben* appears to have had no Hand in the cruel Usage of *Joseph*. He relented in the Beginning; and, by his seasonable Proposal, prevailed with his Brethren to change their Resolution of putting him to immediate Death. He was not present when they sold his Brother to the *Ishmaelites*: But, upon his Return, finding that *Joseph* was not in the Pit, he expresses the greatest Tokens of Grief. *He rent his Cloaths, and said, The Child is not; and whither shall I go?*

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go? We see he did not content himself with having no Hand in the Violence intended against his Brother,--- but opposed those Measures, as far as he had any Opportunity of doing so: He contrived Ways how to deliver him out of this Danger; and when he thought his Contrivances ineffectual, he behaved himself in such a Manner as became him: He expressed a proper Sense both of common Humanity, and of brotherly Affection.

Let us now pass on, and consider how *Joseph's* Brethren behaved themselves, with regard to their Father *Jacob*. They persuaded him, that *Joseph* was torn by wild Beasts. This was done by dipping the Coat of many Colours in Blood, and producing it to their Father.---Guilt hath many Ways of concealing itself from the Knowledge of Men. Many Actions are utterly unknown; and where the Thing itself appears, the Actor is often out of Sight. However, let not the wicked Man comfort himself with the Hopes of escaping finally unpunished. He who sitteth in the Heavens seeth through all Disguises: All our Actions are open to his View: The Day and the Night to Him are both alike: He is intimately present with us where-ever we go,--- at once the Witness and Avenger of our

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Crimes. *Joseph's* Brethren, who could impose upon their Father, shall in future Time see, that their Actions were noted by a higher Being: They shall accuse and condemn themselves, and own the Justice of Providence, in the Punishments inflicted on them.

Jacob, when he was once persuaded of the Death of his favourite Son, expressed the utmost Marks of Concern. *He rent his Cloaths, and put Sackcloth upon his Loins, and mourned for his Son many Days.* His extraordinary Fondness for this Son, made the Loss of him the more insupportable. Our Grief will always bear Proportion to our Love for that Object of which we are deprived; and therefore, if we desire to make Misfortunes tolerable, we must take care to keep our Affections moderate.

But had *Jacob's* Affection, in the present Instance, been kept within the strictest Bounds; yet still, *Joseph*, as his Son, had a Claim to the Affection of a Parent; and where there is such an Affection, it will express itself in Grief and Mourning, when the Person beloved is taken from us. Grief upon such Occasions is natural. Our Blessed Lord himself wept upon the Death of *Lazarus*. To say therefore, that Tears for the Deceased are unseasonable,

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seasonable, because they are unprofitable, is to speak without Regard to the State and Condition of human Nature. A pious Tear is a Sign of Humanity and Generosity: But still, exceeding Care must be taken, that Men do not run into Excesses in this Kind. To *grieve*, may be laudable: To be loud and querulous is childish: And to carry Matters so far as to refuse Comfort, is inexcusable. It is impious towards God; without whose Permission, nothing happens in the World: It expresses too great a Disregard to other Men, as though no one remained worthy of Esteem or Love; and it is highly prejudicial to ourselves, as it impairs our Health, weakens our Minds, unfits us for our several Offices, and sometimes ends in Death itself. It was wrong therefore in *Jacob*, to *refuse to be comforted*; and to say (as he did) *that he would go down to the Grave to his Son, mourning*. Nothing can excuse such a Conduct in *Jacob* but this, that his present Passion overcame his Reason,—and that this Misfortune happened to him at an Age when he was least able to bear it. We find, however, by the Event, that he got the better of his Grief. When the first Fit was over, he grew more moderate: Time, in some degree,

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cured him of his Concern ; and he submitted to that Misfortune he could not avoid.

How would he have rejoiced, had he known the true State of Things !-- *Joseph* still lived. The *Midianites*, who had purchased him of his Brethren, sold him unto *Potiphar*, an Officer of Pharaoh, and Captain of the Guard. This was the first Step towards his future Greatness : It was by this Means that he was introduced into *Pharaoh's* Court, and at length advanced to be his first Minister : It was by this means he was enabled to support his Family, under the Misery of a Famine, and to preserve a Posterity in the Earth. Deep are God's Judgments, and out of the Reach of the most piercing human Knowledge !

The Use which we should make of this Consideration, is, never to despair, even in the most uncomfortable Circumstances : Though we should be deserted by all our Friends on Earth, yet, if we behave ourselves well, we are sure of a Friend above : Perhaps the very Afflictions which we endure, are but the first Steps towards some future Advantage.---These very Afflictions, grievous as they may prove, will become more light to those who endeavour to bear them. The
Aids

S E R M O N IV. 135

Aids and Comforts of the Holy Spirit will be vouchsafed to good Men; and the Miseries which they suffer in this Life, shall be recompensed by greater Degrees of Glory in the next.

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
&c. Amen.

S E R-

SERMON IV. 133

And Comfort of the Holy Spirit will
be poured out to great Mercy, and the
peace which they enter in the time, shall be
renewed by greater degrees of Grace
in the time of their trial.
Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

THE
SACRAMENT OF THE
EUCHARIST
OR
THE LORD'S SUPPER
IS
A
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OF
THE
DEATH
AND
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OF
JESUS
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THE
SACRAMENT
OF
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S E R M O N V.

The History of J O S E P H.

P A R T II.

GEN. xxxix. 1, 2.

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt: And Potiphar, an Officer of Pharaoh, Captain of the Guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the Hands of the Ishmaelites which brought him down thither.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous Man: And he was in the House of his Master the Egyptian.

I Have, in a former Discourse, represented to you some Part of the History of this remarkable Person *Joseph*; and made such Observations, as the History itself gave me just Occasion to offer, and may be most useful in the Conduct of Life.

I have

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I have noted, that *Joseph*, being the favourite Son of his Father, was, for that very Reason, envied by his Brethren; which Displeasure of theirs was farther heightened, by Two prophetic Dreams he related to them, foreshewing his future Advancement, and the Submission which should hereafter be paid him by his Brethren.

Their Resentment at this was carried so far, that having gained an Opportunity, they entered on Measures to destroy his Life, and to defeat his Predictions. But being diverted from this by the Interposition of *Reuben*, they cast him into a Pit; and a Company of *Ismaelitish* Travellers passing by, they at length agreed rather to sell him to the *Ismaelites*, than let him perish with Hunger. They thought this Method would as effectually secure them from ever paying any Obedience to this *Joseph*, as the taking away his Life could do.

And indeed, if we consider Things in a human Way, what Possibility was there, that *Joseph*, who was now sold as a Slave, and carried away into *Egypt*,---a Country far remote, and with which they had no ordinary Intercourse;---that this *Joseph* should rise to any great Figure in the World:---And
least

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least of all, that he should ever have any Command, or Authority over them? But yet, what is impossible with *Men*, is possible with God. No Man, how low and mean soever, is beneath the Care and Protection of Providence. God looketh down with an Eye of Pity and Compassion on the Poor and Friendless: He is a Father to the Fatherless, and a Succour to the Oppressed: And by his mighty Power he delivereth those who are appointed to die.

Now the Workings of Providence are Two-fold; either *Extraordinary*, or *Ordinary*.

Upon some great and concerning Occasions, God is pleased to act in a remarkable Manner; to make bare his almighty Arm; and to teach Men, (what they are not always apt to consider) that his Power ruleth over all. In this Way he proceeded, when he delivered, with a mighty Hand, the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*. But the usual Manner of his Proceeding is more agreeable to the standing Laws, which he hath established in the World. He doth not interpose in a miraculous and extraordinary Manner, but upon the greatest Occasions; when his Ends cannot be obtained in the ordinary Way,—and it imports Mankind that he should give some distinguishing Mark of his Care over us.

In

In the History of *Joseph* we have several Instances, both of the ordinary, and of the miraculous Providence of God. That he should be sold to *Potiphar* beyond all others, is a remarkable Circumstance; and the more so, because all his future Fortunes turned on it; yet there is nothing in this supernatural. —But, that he should interpret the several Dreams, I shall hereafter mention; and that these Interpretations should be immediately verified by the Event; is a plain Evidence of a higher Power, and of the miraculous Assistance of the Holy Spirit.

The First thing, which I am to note, in that Portion of History I am now to represent to you, is this; that the *Ishmaelites* sold *Joseph* to *Potiphar*: This, I say, though not miraculous, was yet providential. It was the great Point, on which all those notable Events, that afterwards followed, turned. We may conclude therefore, that it did not come to pass by chance. We argue, in common Affairs, that nicely to suit and adapt Means to Ends, requires Foresight and Design. Chance may indeed hit right upon a certain Occasion: But where-ever we see that several Things correspond to one another, and all jointly contribute to one common Event, there we presume that Chance

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is utterly excluded. It was therefore ordered by a *higher* Power, that *Joseph* should rather be sold to *Potiphar*, than any other Person. But if it be enquired, *How*, and by *what means*, Providence acts in such Cases?—We can make no distinct Answer. Secret Things belong to God: And it is sufficient for us, that we receive the Benefit of God's Providence, without enquiring too curiously into the Manner of its Administration.

To pass on: It is added in the History, that *the Lord was with Joseph*; and *he was a prosperous Man*. The *Lord was with him*, i. e. favoured him in a remarkable Manner: And this appeared in that wonderful Success, which attended every thing he took in Hand. The young Man was, no doubt, diligent and industrious; and perhaps used a great deal of Skill and Dexterity in his Affairs. This of itself, and in the natural Course of Things, must make him prosperous beyond others of less Art and Diligence. But this was not all: We may reasonably presume that his Piety and Virtue gave Success to his Endeavours; and prevailed with the Supreme Being (who loveth and careth for the Righteous) to interpose in his Favour, and to distinguish him from the rest of Mankind: For thus we are told,

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told, Chap. xxxix. ver. 3. *And his Master saw that the Lord was with him ; and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his Hand.*

We have no Reason to wonder, that his Master, upon this Observation which he had made, of the Conduct and Success of *Joseph*, should regard him in a singular Manner. Great Abilities, joined with great Success, will demand Notice ; and especially, if there be a Presumption, that a Man is favoured by Heaven itself. Hence it came to pass, that *Joseph found Grace in his Master's Sight, and he served him : And he made him Overseer over all his House, and all that he had he put into his Hand,* ver. 4. Here was a prodigious Change of Circumstances. — He, who a little before was sold by his Brethren, — brought down to *Egypt*, — and delivered over to *Potiphar* as a Slave, is now advanced to a creditable and advantageous Post ; — made Steward to a rich and great Man ; — the Director of all his Fortunes. This was an Advancement no one could have expected ; and which must have proved so much the more agreeable to *Joseph*, as it was less hoped for by him. I have noted before, that this Instance should teach us to rely on the Care and Protection of Providence, in the most comfortless Circumstances

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stances of Life; because, how hopeless soever our Condition may, in human Accounts, appear, yet there is a God above, who careth for us; and is both able and willing to relieve us from all our Troubles. I will add one Observation more on this extraordinary Advancement of *Joseph*; viz. That it concerned him, on this Occasion, to have a watchful Care over himself. Prosperity is perhaps more dangerous to our Virtue than Adversity: It is apt to make us vain and insolent; regardless of others, and forgetful of God; ambitious in our Pursuits, and intemperate in our Enjoyments. Thus it proved to the wisest Man upon Earth, I mean *Solomon*, who was by this means seduced from that Obedience, he was obliged, as well in Gratitude as Duty, to have paid; and who disgraced those singular Degrees of Wisdom he enjoyed, By inexcusable Instances of Folly.

Joseph, whom I am now speaking of, acted in a much better Manner. He was diligent and faithful in his Master's Service; and the Event was such as might be expected in such a Case: *For it came to pass, that, from the time that he made him Overseer in his House, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's House, for Joseph's Sake: And the Blessing*

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Blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, in the House, and in the Field.

If we proceed in this History, we shall see a remarkable Instance of the Honesty and Faithfulness of *Joseph*: An Instance, which ought ever to be remembered and imitated; and to have recommended him to the highest Degrees of his Master's Love and Confidence; —though, by the Management of his Adversary, it was turned to his Disservice. It is noted at the 6th Verse, that *Joseph was a goodly Person, and well-favoured*. This, at the same time that it ministered an Occasion to manifest his Virtue, drew on him as great a Misfortune as he had ever yet endured;—and robbed him of those Advantages he now enjoyed so worthily. It gained the Affection of his Master's Wife; who, being taken with *Joseph's* Person, forgot the Duty she owed to her Lord. Being enslaved to a vicious Passion, she put off the Modesty which is proper, and almost natural, to her Sex. She tempted *Joseph* in the grossest Terms: Nor could one Denial be sufficient; she continually repeated the Temptation,—grew more urgent and shameless; she spake to him Day by Day: But the virtuous Youth withstood the Temptation, often as it was repeated

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repeated to him. The History tells us, *He refused, and said to his Master's Wife; Behold! my Master wotteth not what is with me in the House, and he hath committed all that he hath to my Hand; there is none greater in this House than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his Wife. How then can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* He alledges, in the most modest Manner, Gratitude to his Master, and Obedience to the Divine Will. The Favours which his Master had bestowed upon him, were sufficient, to such a grateful Mind as his, to prevent his doing any thing which might justly displease his Master; much less could he bear the Thought of turning these very Favours to his Dishonour; and of injuring him in the most sensible Manner, by those very Advantages which he held under him. To this he adds, that the Regard he owed to the Supreme Being, would ever forbid him to gratify such unlawful Requests. The Voice of God and Nature speak plainly against such Liberties; *How then could he do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?*

These Considerations, by which the Youth put off the Temptation, might be equally applied to the Case of *Joseph's* Mistress her-

self. She was the Wife of *Potiphar*; and being supported by him in a Way suitable to his Quality, and made Partaker of his Fortune and Enjoyments, she owed him a Debt of Gratitude. Besides, that the Obligations of Religion are common to all Mankind: That in Marriage there is a mutual Vow of Fidelity by each of the married Persons to the other; and that Adultery is condemned by all Religions, and by all Laws. *How then could she do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?*

I cannot pass on without taking some farther Notice of this Point. The Persons concerned in this Vice are of Two Sorts, either *Single* or *Married*; and these must be distinctly considered, because the Sin may receive different Aggravations, in proportion to these different Circumstances. In single Persons it is termed *Fornication*; but in married Persons, *Adultery*: Both of them indeed highly criminal, but yet in different Degrees. *Fornication* is utterly unlawful; expressly condemned by the Word of God, and inconsistent with the Natures and Reasons of Things. ---But *Adultery*, beyond all the several Reasons, which may be alledged against Fornication, hath this also peculiar to it, that it is

a Violation of the most sacred Engagements that can possibly be entered into; I mean, those, whereby each Person obliges himself to be constant and faithful to the other. What can be depended upon, when, to gratify a brutish Passion, Men will break through the most solemn Ties,---prejudice the Interests of themselves and Families,----destroy all Regularity and Order,---and introduce into Society those very Evils, which Society was instituted to prevent?---Agreeably, God hath set a particular Mark of Disapprobation on this Vice, by representing all Apostacy from Him to Idolatry, under the Character of Spiritual Adultery; and by commanding in the *Jewish* Law, that the Adulterer should immediately be put to Death.

However, though there be some aggravating Circumstances in the Sin of Adultery, yet we may observe that Fornication also is expressly forbidden in the Holy Scriptures. *Fornicators and Adulterers*, saith the Apostle, *God will judge*. It is a polluting our Bodies, which are the Temples of the Holy Ghost:----It brings Dishonour into Families;---does Mischief irreparable to the weaker Sex,---exposes them to Infamy and Reproach,---brings Misfortunes upon them which they cannot

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bear, and at the same time it deprives them of the only thing which can comfort them, Compassion for their Misfortunes ;---grieves and afflicts their Parents or Relations ;--who, at the same time that they condemn these Errors, feel some Part of the Shame due to them.---Who would not think himself ill used in having the Honour of a Daughter, or a Sister, or any other near Relation, violated ? Let a Man think in what manner he would be apt to resent such Usage himself; and then (if he hath any Sparks remaining of common Humanity, to say nothing of common Modesty) he can never think himself excuseable in making Attempts on the Honour and Chastity of others.

To return from this Digression, and proceed in the History before us. *Joseph*, I have observed, was sensible of the Unlawfulness of giving way to the Requests of his Mistress : He therefore abstained from all such sinful Commerce : And, to secure his Virtue the better, he avoided, as much as possible, all Opportunities of renewing the Temptation. *He cared not to be with her.* Temptations are much better declined than combated. As our Nature is corrupted, there is a Foe within us, which is ready to betray us ; and there
can

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can be no Security, without keeping the strictest Watch over ourselves. It is made one Article of our daily Prayers, that God would *not lead us into Temptation*,—i. e. would not, in his ordinary Providence, permit us to fall into Temptation : Why then should we, of our own accord, run ourselves into those Dangers, from which we pray for a Deliverance?—We cannot hope to combat these Temptations without the Divine Assistance: But this we forfeit, when, through our own Fault, we have made it necessary : We tempt God, and expose ourselves. From the Conduct of *Joseph* therefore, we should learn these important Rules ; viz. To resist to the utmost those Temptations we cannot avoid ;—and to avoid, as far as possible, those Temptations we may not be able to resist.

Upon a certain Occasion, however, it happened that *Joseph*, in the Discharge of his Employment, was obliged to appear in his Mistress's Presence. This encouraged her to renew her Sollicitations with greater Earnestness ; to use Violence, in order to compass her Desires, and to seize on *Joseph's* Garment. But he fled from the Temptation ; and as he fled, he left the Garment, which she had seized, in her Hand. Upon this, one Passion disap-

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pointed raises another ; and Rage succeeds in the room of a vicious Desire. She immediately calls the Servants to bear witness, that *Joseph* had left his Garment in her Hand. She meditates the most bitter Revenge ; and contrives the Execution of it in a very artful Manner. She waited till her Lord came home ; and then accuses *Joseph* of that Crime, of which she herself was guilty. *The Hebrew Servant*, saith she, *which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me, to mock me : And it came to pass, as I lifted up my Voice and cried, that he left his Garment with me, and fled out ;* ver. 17, 18. Thus, you see, one Sin draws on another. She had been unfaithful to her Lord, in endeavouring to bring Dishonour upon him ; and when these Endeavours did not succeed, she could not stop here ; but aggravated the Fault of a criminal Desire by a false Accusation. The same may be observed in almost every other Instance of Sin. When we venture on the Commission of it, we lose the Command of ourselves : We roll on, as a Stone down a Precipice, unable to say where we shall stop, or how far we shall go. The Contrivance succeeded : *Potiphar* believed his Wife : His Wrath was kindled, as we might suppose it would, upon the Sense of such an Indignity

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Indignity offered to him, in spite of the greatest Obligations to the contrary. *He took him therefore, and put him in Prison, where the King's Prisoners were bound.* It was reasonable indeed, and would have become *Potiphar*, to have examined more narrowly into the Case. He ought not to have proceeded to such Extremities, without the strongest Proof,-----But he was too tender of his Wife, who ungratefully repaid his Tenderness; and whilst he thought to have vindicated his Honour, he exposed it. I will not make any other Reflection on the Conduct of *Potiphar*, who is not distinguished in this History with any Mark of Infamy.

This Error however (for I will not give it any harsher Name) cost *Joseph* dear. He forfeited his Post; and, what is worse, was treated as the worst of Criminals. From whence we may learn, that the greatest Innocence cannot secure us from Misfortunes. We are born to Trouble; and ought rather to expect it, than be surpris'd at it. Nay, it sometimes happens, that our Virtue itself will expose us to Sufferings. Yet we ought not, on this account, to accuse the Providence of God. This World is a Place, not of Retribution, but Trial. If we are true

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to ourselves, God will assist us in these Sufferings; and perhaps make them (as he had done before in the Case of *Joseph*) the Steps and Means towards a greater Advancement. Thus likewise it happened in the very Instance before us: God shewed him Mercy in this great Distress, *and gave him Favour in the Sight of the Keeper of the Prison*; i. e. He inclined and disposed his Mind towards him, either by some immediate Act of Power,--- or else by bringing to his Knowledge the Innocence and Virtue of his Prisoner. To which we may add one thing more, that the Lord shewed him some distinguishing Favour, by some outward and notorious Signs: For we are told, that *the Keeper of the Prison committed to Joseph's Hand all the Prisoners that were in the Prison: He looked not to any thing that was under his Hand, because the Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper*. Thus we may observe the Favour of God still followed him; and this was sufficient to comfort him under his present Confinement, and to assure him of a future Deliverance.

It happened, whilst *Joseph* was in these Circumstances, that Two Officers of *Pharaoh*, who had offended him, were committed to
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the same Prison, and that the Captain of the Guard charged *Joseph* with them. These Persons each dreamed his Dream; and being persuaded that there was something extraordinary portended by it, they were deeply concerned, because they knew not the Interpretation of it. Here was an happy Occasion offered to *Joseph*, of manifesting a divine Skill in Interpretations of this nature. Things of this kind, he tells them, are above any human Power, and must be derived from that Being, who was the Author of these Dreams. *Do not Interpretations belong to God?* ver. 8. However, to shew them what Knowledge and Skill the Supreme Being had communicated to him, he desires them to tell him their Dreams. The Result was, that he immediately assigned the Meaning. To the Butler he declared, that within Three Days he should be restored to his former Office.—Upon which, he requests him to remember his Case, when he should have so good an Opportunity of serving him;—to make favourable mention of him to *Pharaoh*, as a Person, who was rather unfortunate than criminal, and who had done nothing worthy of that Imprisonment he suffered.—To the Baker he predicted an Event, which was more severe:

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severe: He tells him, that within Three Days he should be put to death, and his Body exposed as a Prey to Vulturs. The Interpretations were accordingly verified; and the Credit of the Prophet established beyond Question. One might have thought that the Butler could not easily forget this extraordinary Person: Yet it is said, that *he remembered him not.* Prosperity is very apt to puff Men up; to incline them to Vanity, and to make them overlook the Concerns of other Men. This we see plainly in the Instance before us. He bestowed not One kind Thought on *Joseph* for full Two Years. He contented himself with following his own Pleasures, and enjoying the good Fortune which had befallen him;---whilst this innocent and extraordinary Person was left friendless in Prison, and supported only by the Consciousness of his Innocence, and the Favour of his God.

At length the Time of his Deliverance drew near: For, at the End of Two full Years, *Pharaoh* himself dreamed Two prophetic Dreams: They seemed to point at the same Event, whatever that Event were; and *Pharaoh* was persuaded that these Dreams were supernatural. Whether this Persuasion arose from

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from the Liveliness of the Impressions made on him, or from whatever other Cause, we know not: This we are assured of, that whenever God is pleased to signify any thing to Men, he can and will take care that Men shall know it to be a Divine Manifestation. In this Instance, and several others recorded in Holy Scripture, God declared his Will by certain typical Representations: These Representations were not always understood by those Persons to whom they were made; in which Cases, they were wont to have recourse to Persons eminent for interpreting such Types; and the Providence of God so ordered it, that there should be always some Person or other ready, to whom the Gift of Interpretation was vouchsafed.

Pharaoh, as we might expect, was much concerned on this Occasion; and uneasy, till he might learn what his Dreams portended. He sent therefore for the Magicians and wise Men of *Egypt*,—told the Dream,—and demanded the Meaning. But secret things belong to God, and are not to be brought under the Rules of human Learning. The Devil may mimick the Power of God,—but not his Knowledge. The Dreams proceeded from a Divine Influence, and therefore could be interpreted

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interpreted only by a Divine Skill. In this Perplexity of *Pharaoh*, desirous of Information, and yet incapable of receiving it, the chief Butler, who had so signally experienced the Skill of *Joseph*, gave an Account of him to the King.—*Joseph* therefore was sent for, and the Two Dreams proposed to him:—He undertakes to interpret them, but at the same time denies that he could do it by his own Power. *It is not, saith he, in me to interpret; God shall give Pharaoh an Answer of Peace.* The Instrument of any extraordinary Action ought not to arrogate that Praise, which is due only to the Author of it. Even our ordinary Powers proceed from God; and therefore, as we should do every thing to His Glory; so, when we have done it, we should ascribe our doing it to His Power.

To proceed; *Joseph* declares that *Pharaoh's* Two Dreams of the fat and lean Kine, and of the full and thin Ears of Corn, portended the very same Event. *This is the Thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh, saith he; what God is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold! there come Seven Years of great Plenty:—And there shall arise after them, Seven Years of Famine: And all the Plenty shall be forgotten in the Land: And the*

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the Famine shall consume the Land, Chap. xli. ver. 28--30. The doubling of the Dream, and Representation, he tells him, signified the Certainty and Speediness of the Event. This then God had shewed to *Pharaoh*.

But it may here be demanded, whence it should come to pass, that such signal Favour, as the Manifestation of the Divine Will about future Events, should be vouchsafed to a Heathen Prince? Those who had renounced the true God, one might think should be neglected by him. Thus we are apt to reason with ourselves. But an All-good Being makes Allowances for the Mistakes and Infirmities of Mankind. *Pharaoh* doth not appear to have been an ill Man :---Or, whatever he were, yet he presided over a numerous People, whose Preservation was concerned in this prophetic Dream: And as the neighbouring Countries had recourse to *Egypt* in their Extremities, so it was expedient, even for *their* Sakes, that *Pharaoh* should be warned, in some extraordinary Manner, to make a suitable Provision. *Joseph* therefore closes his Interpretation of the Dreams with an Advice: *Let Pharaoh do this; Let him appoint Officers over the Land, and take up the Fifth Part of the Land of Egypt, in the Seven*
plenteous

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plenteous Years.---And this Food shall be Store for the Land, against the Seven Years of Famine, ver. 34-36. This plainly points out the End and Design of these Dreams: And the Advice appeared so reasonable to Pharaoh and his Servants, that he delivered himself in this Manner to Joseph: Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.---See, I have set thee over all the Land of Egypt.---And he took his Ring from off his Hand, and put it upon Joseph's Hand; and he arrayed him in Vestures of fine Linen, and put a Gold Chain about his Neck. And he made him ride in the second Chariot which he had: And they cried before him, Bow the Knee: And he made him Ruler over all the Land of Egypt.

We have now followed *Joseph* to the Height of his Advancement. We have seen him in all the several Parts of Life, virtuous and religious; patient and courageous under the greatest Misfortunes; and modest and temperate in the greatest Successes. His Virtue indeed had for some time been ill rewarded. He was imprisoned by his Master, for being just and faithful to him, in a Point, in which his Peace and Honour were in the greatest degree concerned. Yet, though he suffered,

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suffered, his own Innocence gave him some Comfort, and the Spirit of God greater. He resigned himself up entirely to the Divine Will, --as knowing, that, whatever happens, it will work together for good, to them that love God. The Divine Workings are indeed many times to us unsearchable : But we may satisfy ourselves, that they are always managed by infinite Goodness and Wisdom. *Joseph* trusted in God ; who not only delivered him from the Prison where he had been confined, but at once advanced him to be First Minister to the King of *Egypt*. Such was the Reward of his Piety ! And thus was it done to that Person whom the Lord delighted to honour.

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
&c. Amen.

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S E R M O N VI.

The History of JOSEPH.

P A R T III.

G E N. xli. 46.

And Joseph was Thirty Years old when he stood before Pharaoh King of Egypt: And Joseph went out from the Presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the Land of Egypt.

I Have in some former Discourses gone through a considerable Part of the History of *Joseph*; and made such Observations whilst I passed along, as have a proper Foundation in the Story, and may be most serviceable in the Conduct of Life.

We have seen the young Man, his Father's Favourite, hated because he was his

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Favourite ;—

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Favourite ;--persecuted by his own Brethren ;
 ---fold as a Slave to the *Ishmaelites* ;---bought
 at length by *Potiphar* ; and then preferred to
 be the Manager of all his Estate and Fortunes.
 God supported him in his Adversity ; and
 since he behaved himself with Patience and
 Resignation, gave him a happy Deliverance
 out of all his Troubles.

In this Change of Fortune he preserved his
 Innocence entire. He acted with Faithful-
 ness and Discretion : And the same Provi-
 dence which had supported him in Adver-
 sity, now favoured him in Prosperity.

There is one Instance of the young Man's
 Virtue, which deserves especial Notice ; and
 so much the more, because Examples of this
 kind are too rare ; I mean, his Behaviour to-
 wards his Master's Wife. She had tempted
 him to be unfaithful to his Lord, and re-
 peated the Temptation in the most pressing
 Terms : But his Sense of Duty overcame the
 Temptation ; and he chose rather to expose
 himself to the Resentments of his Mistress,
 than to injure his Master, and offend against
 his God.

It happened indeed (as the best Men are
 not secure against Calamity) that this very
 Instance of Virtue was turned to his Disser-
 vice :

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vice : He was accused of Designs which he abhorred ; and, in consequence of this, displaced from that Office he managed so worthily ; and at length cast into Prison. But God searcheth the Heart, and trieth the Reins : He saw *Joseph's* Innocence perfectly ; and as he now suffered in a good Cause, he shewed him Favour under his Distress.

I would not be tedious in repeating what hath formerly been delivered. I shall therefore only observe farther, that by interpreting the several Dreams of his Two fellow Prisoners,----and afterward, upon the Fame of this, being called upon to interpret *Pharaoh's* Dream, concerning the Seven Years of Plenty, and the succeeding ones of Famine ; he so recommended himself to the King, that he was set over the whole Land of *Egypt*. This was the Reward of his Integrity and Patience. And in some such Manner may every other good Man hope to be considered, by an All-knowing and gracious God. Only, we should take this Consideration along with us, that to raise Men to any considerable Fortune in this Life, may not always be consistent with the publick and common Good. The wise Governor of the World considers rather the general Interest, than the private Advan-

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tages of Men. But then, we may depend on a more abundant Recompence hereafter ; and rest assured, that *the present light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, shall work for us a more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

The Design of my present Discourse is, to consider the Conduct and Behaviour of *Joseph*, in this great Turn and Revolution of his Fortunes; and to offer some Observations on those Particulars, which may be most serviceable to my Hearers.

I am to note therefore, in the First place, that as soon as *Joseph* was invested with this full Power over the Dominions of *Pharaoh*, he immediately took a Survey of the Land, and entered on proper Measures to discharge the Office he had undertaken. He did not consider his Advancement as intended merely to give him a Figure, and to gratify his own Pride and Vanity. He knew that this was intended for the publick Good; to enable him to do some general Service,---and to preserve Life. This is indeed the Design of Providence, whenever a Person is advanced to any Station of Figure or Fortune. And consequently, Men should consider, that the more they enjoy, they are accountable for so much the more ;---and, as they are capable of doing the
more

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more Good,---so, by neglecting these Opportunities, they expose themselves to the greater Punishments.

Joseph, I say, had these Thoughts familiar to his Mind ; and therefore, having been forewarned, that Seven Years of Famine should succeed the Seven plenteous Years, in which the Earth brought forth abundantly,--he took care to gather up the Food of the Seven Years,---and to dispose of it in proper Places. For it is said, *He gathered Corn as the Sand of the Sea, very much, until he left numbering*, Chap. xli. ver. 49.

From *Joseph's* Conduct on this Occasion, we may learn a very important Point of Instruction ; viz. That we ought not to be careless and indifferent about the future ;---But as there are Goods in Life possible to be obtained, and Evils capable of being avoided, so we should provide ourselves with proper Means to obtain the one, and to escape the other. Watchfulness and Industry are natural Virtues, and recommended to us in Scripture, by the Conduct even of Brute Creatures. Whilst we neglect our own Interests, we deserve the Calamities which come upon us ; and have no Reason to hope for the Compassion of others, when we take

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no care of ourselves.----Our Saviour indeed teaches, *that we should take no Thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed?-----That we should take no Thought for the Morrow: For the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of itself.* But we mistake these Words entirely, if we draw any Conclusions from them inconsistent with the Doctrine I have now advanced. Our Blessed Lord doth not here condemn in us that proper Care, which the Condition of our Nature, and the Circumstances of Life require. This would carry the Point beyond Reason, and prejudice the very Cause which he came to support. If we consider the Tenor of our Saviour's Discourse, the Meaning of these Words will be clear; *No Man, saith he, can serve Two Masters:---Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. No Man can SERVE, i. e.* be in entire Subjection to them: *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else, he will hold to the one, and despise the other.---Therefore take no Thought for your Life.* The Thoughtfulness for Life, here condemned, is plainly such an anxious Concern for the Things of Life, as renders us entire Slaves to the World: It is such a Thoughtfulness, as disquiets and
torments

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torments us, and renders the very Goods we enjoy tasteless. This appears from our Saviour's own Argument, why we should take no Thought for the Morrow,---*sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.* The Carefulness I am now recommending from the Example of *Joseph*, is of a quite different Nature from the Thoughtfulness which our Blessed Saviour forbids. The one serves to make Life more easy, by wisely guarding against future Contingencies; the other disquiets us, by uneasy Apprehensions of what is to come: The one expresses a Dependence on Providence, whilst we rationally pursue that End, which Providence intends: The other argues a Distrust in God, as though his Care over Men were less extensive, than his Regard to the brute Creation. Our Blessed Lord therefore, thus expostulates on this Occasion; *Wherefore, if God clothe the Grass of the Field, which To-day is, and To-morrow is cast into the Oven; shall he not much more clothe You, O ye of little Faith!* Matt. vi. 30.

To proceed: The Seven Years of Plenteousness at length expired; in which, by the wise and faithful Conduct of *Joseph*, sufficient Provision was made against the succeeding Seven Years of Famine. Were Men generally dis-

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posed to act with Discretion, there would have been less Occasion for this extraordinary Expedient of *Joseph's*: But Thoughtlessness is a common Infirmary of our Nature; and whilst we abound with the good Things of Life, we are less careful to guard ourselves against future Misfortunes. So it happened to the *Egyptians*, and the neighbouring Nations. They enjoyed,—or rather lavished away, the Plenty of the Seven prosperous Years; and when the Time of Distress was come, they had recourse to *Joseph* for Relief under those Wants, against which they had made no manner of Provision.

In considering this Part of *Joseph's* Behaviour, I would avoid Confusion as much as possible; and therefore shall treat, *first*, of his Conduct towards his own Family and Relations; and then, towards the *Egyptians*, over whom he presided.

His Family and Relations had their Abode in *Canaan*; in which Place the Famine, it seems, prevailed; and *Jacob's* Sons were distressed, and uncertain which way to relieve themselves; at length, being informed that Provisions had been laid up in *Egypt*, the good old Patriarch dispatched his Sons thither;—only he kept with himself *Benjamin*, his youngest

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youngest Son ; who, it seems, was become his Favourite, after the supposed Death of *Joseph*.

Accordingly, *the Sons of Israel came to buy Corn in Egypt, where Joseph their Brother was then Governor ;-----and they came and bowed themselves before him, with their Faces to the Earth*, ver. 6. This was a surprising Change of Circumstances : They, who some few Years before, had exercised an unheard-of Authority over their Brother ; They, who had sold him as a Slave ; They, who were prevailed upon to enter on these desperate Measures, to prevent the Accomplishment of a prophetic Dream, importing, that a Time should come, when *Joseph* should receive Honour from all his Brethren ;---These Persons, I say, *now bow themselves before Joseph, with their Faces to the Earth*. So vain is it to contend with the Almighty, or to endeavour to hinder the Execution of his Decrees ! These very Endeavours shall promote the End they would prevent, and *the Fierceness of Man shall turn to God's Praise*.

The Behaviour of *Joseph* on this Occasion is somewhat remarkable. He immediately knew his Brethren, and recollected the Dream, which was fulfilled by the present Incident.

He

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He therefore *made himself strange, and spake roughly to them: Whence come ye?* said he;---
Ye are Spies; to see the Nakedness of the Land ye are come. We might be apt to think, if we proceeded no farther, that this Conduct was partly the Effect of Resentment, partly of Pride. But if we carry our Thoughts on to the remaining Part of this History, *Joseph's* Character will be thoroughly vindicated. To go on then; *Joseph* was dissatisfied, that his younger Brother *Benjamin* did not appear amongst his other Brethren: He was desirous therefore of knowing whether *Benjamin* were really alive; and since it was pretended, that *Jacob* their Father had kept this his youngest Son at home with him, he insisted, that one of them should be dispatched away, to fetch their younger Brother, and the rest detained in Prison, till his Return. Accordingly, they were all of them imprisoned for Three Days. No doubt but it appeared to them somewhat extraordinary, that so considerable a Person as the chief Governor of *Egypt*, should enquire so critically into the Condition of a particular Family; and so much the more so, as he insisted on seeing their younger Brother; and their Apprehensions too could not but be very great on this Occasion, as they knew
 what

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what Tenderneſs *Jacob* had for this favourite Son, and, conſequently, how difficult a Point it might prove, to answer the Demands of the *Egyptian* Governor. Difficulties and Distresses these were, with which they had not hitherto been acquainted ! But these Difficulties had a good Effect on them, and brought them to look back on their past Misbehaviour, which had escaped Notice hitherto. It does not appear, that they had ever troubled themselves what was become of *Joseph*, till their own Distresses reminded them of his : And as the Sufferings they now laboured under were very remarkable, so they could not but think them to be the Effects of Divine Vengeance. *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear : Therefore is this Distress come upon us.* Such must be the Sentiments of every other wicked Man, when Misfortune overtakes him. He may lose the Sense of his Guilt, amidst the Hurry or Amusements of a prosperous Life : But, as soon as Affliction comes upon him, he grows more serious and thoughtful : Then he recollects his former Provocations, and feels the just Hand of God. A painful,
but

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but yet a happy Circumstance, if he knows how to make a right Use of it; if he truly bewails his Miscarriages, and carefully reforms them. Then will God forgive, and be gracious. But if these Corrections prove ineffectual, his Case becomes forlorn and desperate: Misfortunes will croud on upon Misfortunes; till the impious Creature, still suffering and sinning on, at length fills up the Measure of his Iniquities, and is consigned over to those Punishments which shall never end.

Amidst these Disquiets, *Joseph* (who retained no Thoughts of Revenge for what he formerly suffered) relieves them: He proposes the detaining one Person only, as a Security for the Truth of what they had declared; and the dispatching away all the rest, with sufficient Provision for their Families at home. This was very welcome News; and, without question, gave them great Comfort under the sad Apprehensions they had entertained.

As it is my present Purpose, to give an Account of the Conduct and Behaviour of *Joseph*, it will be unnecessary to offer any particular Remarks on what followed, till their Return to *Egypt*. Only thus much it will be proper to observe, that, as the History

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story tells us, *Joseph* inwardly entertained a vast Tenderness and Affection for his Brethren, so he expressed it, by restoring each Person his Money in his Sack. This was misunderstood by them at first, and created them no small Uneasiness: But the Event cleared up the Meaning. To proceed then: They return to their Father *Jacob*; give an Account of what had happened; intreat him to permit his younger Son to go down with them when they went a Second time; and, tho' with much Difficulty, at length prevail.

The great Point being now gained, and their younger Brother in Company, they obtained a more favourable Reception than formerly: *For when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the Ruler of his House, Bring these Men home, and slay and make ready; for these Men shall dine with me at Noon.*

It would be too tedious to make large Observations on every Incident in this Story; to note the Apprehension which *Joseph's* Brethren entertained, when they were brought into *Joseph's* House:—Their Behaviour on that Occasion; the kind Treatment they met with from *Joseph's* Steward; the First tender Interview between *Joseph* and his Brother *Benjamin*; the Order and Management of
the

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the Feast ; and the distinguishing Notice which was taken of *Benjamin*.

Nor shall I detain you with any Remarks on the Contrivance which *Joseph* made use of to recall his Brethren, after they had finished the Affair which they came about, and had obtained Liberty to return home : Thus much will be sufficient to recollect, that *Benjamin*, for whose safe Return *Jacob* was so solicitous, and for whom *Judah*, in particular, had engaged himself, was, by this Contrivance, reduced to the utmost Difficulty, and, in all appearance, guilty of a very unworthy Behaviour. But the Truth will immediately clear up ; and the Design of the whole Contrivance be found to be this, that *Joseph* was desirous of discovering himself to his Brethren in the most tender Manner, and a Way most likely to make Impressions on them.

In the midst of this Distress, it is said, that *Joseph* could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him ; and he cried, Cause every Man to go out from me.—And he wept aloud.—And *Joseph* said unto his Brethren, I am JOSEPH : Doth my Father yet live ?—So unexpected,----so surprising an Incident, we might suppose, would make the deepest Impressions

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pressions on *Joseph's* Brethren. Even Joy itself will overpower the Mind, if it be great and sudden ; but Fear is apt to have a more powerful Effect ; and the Remembrance of their former Conduct towards their Brother, might make them dread his Resentment, when he had it so much in his Power to shew it. Thus we are told, that *they could not answer him ; for they were troubled at his Presence.*

This the good Man observed with Concern ; and therefore endeavoured to satisfy them, that he retained no Sense of former Injuries ; that he was desirous of nothing more, than to express his Tenderness towards them, and to make them forget, if possible, their own past Faults.---*And Joseph said unto his Brethren, Come near to me, I pray you : And they came near : And he said, I am Joseph your Brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither : For God did send me before you to preserve Life.*

Thus you see, instead of aggravating their past ill Behaviour towards him, he endeavoured to quiet their Minds, by observing, that the Whole was owing to the secret Influence of Providence : That he was sent
into

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into *Egypt*, to preserve Life ; that there were Five Years more of Famine yet to come ; and therefore, that, instead of making bitter Reflections on themselves, they should hasten back to their aged Father ;—acquaint him, that his Son *Joseph* was alive ; that God had made him Lord of *Egypt* ; and that he was desirous of nothing more than to pay his Duty to his Father, in the most useful manner : That he should immediately come down to *Egypt*, and partake of the Plenty, which had been laid up there. Here is noble Matter of Instruction. The affectionate Brother forgets his past Sufferings ; and is so far from endeavouring to revenge himself, and to afflict the Authors of his Wrongs, that he employs his whole Power to comfort and relieve them. A Behaviour this, different from what most Men would be apt to discover on a like Occasion : The Sense of Injuries is apt to bear too hard on the Mind ; and they are transported into Measures both mischievous and unreasonable. For I would desire to know, what real Advantage is there got, by making other Men miserable ;—by returning on them the Hardships we have formerly suffered from them ? Are we capable of taking Pleasure in the Misfortunes of others ?

Persons

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Persons of such a Temper, do not deserve to breathe. This then is not the Case : It is a present Transport, occasioned either by the Feeling or the Remembrance of an Injury, which hurries us on into Extravagancies of this kind, and makes us, whilst we rage against others, forget ourselves.---We ease our Minds indeed by throwing off a present Load ; but then we treasure up against ourselves a deal of Wrath hereafter, the Anger of an Enemy, whom we have irritated ; and, what is worse, and less capable of being borne, we stir up our own Consciences. Most Men are sorry, in their cooler Hours, for the Mischief they did when they gave way to Passion ; and are apt to lament, what they cannot perhaps, by the best After-care, repair. *Joseph*, we see, indulged a braver and more generous Inclination. His Humanity, and Good-nature, and brotherly Affection, stifled all Sense of his former Wrongs ; he endeavoured even to excuse what had been done against him, by alledging, that all was owing to the secret Influence of Providence, in order to bring about the most concerning Event ; to save the Lives of Multitudes of Men, who must otherwise have perished in this Famine. To these kind and tender Expressions, he

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added all the Endearments of Behaviour, which could be shewn on the Occasion. It is said, that *He fell on his Brother Benjamin's Neck, and wept.*----*Moreover he kissed all his Brethren, and wept over them ; and after that, his Brethren talked with him.*

Beyond all this, Provision was made by the Commandment of *Pharaoh* himself (who was pleased with an Opportunity of shewing Favour to *Joseph's* Kindred) ;---Provision, I say, was made for bringing down the whole Family of *Jacob* into *Egypt* : *Joseph's* Brethren were sent back to order and conduct this Affair ; and before they set out, they received this necessary Piece of Advice, *See that ye fall not out by the way.* It appears, by what I have had Occasion to mention before concerning them, that they were Persons of an unhappy Temper ; proud and peevish ; easily transported with Anger and Resentment ; and apt to carry Matters to the utmost Excesses. *Joseph* himself had formerly felt this to the purpose : He therefore persuades them to take an especial Care to prevent the first Beginnings of Dissention ; which, unless it be entirely prevented, will be too hard to be mastered, and produce Effects too grievous to be borne. Excellent is the Advice and
 Obser-

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Observation of the wise Man : The Beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water : Therefore leave off Contention before it be meddled with.

Thus the Sons of *Jacob* came unto the Land of Canaan to their Father ; and told him, saying, *Joseph is yet alive ; and is Governor over all the Land of Egypt.* So surprising a Piece of News affected him exceedingly ; *his Heart fainted* at the Account ; and he knew not how to give it Credit. But at length, when he saw the valuable Presents which were sent him, he began to think there was some Truth in their Account ; *his Spirit revived* ; and he immediately resolved upon a Journey into Egypt. *Joseph*, saith he, *my Son, is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die.*

Let us now carry on our Thoughts to the Arrival of *Jacob* in Egypt ; where *Joseph* paid Attendance on his Father, in the most dutiful Manner. For we are informed in this History, *that he made ready his Chariot, and went up to meet Israel his Father ; and he presented himself unto him ; and he fell on his Neck, and wept on his Neck a good while.* We cannot conceive any thing more tender than this Interview between an affectionate Parent and a dutiful Son, who had not seen one

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another for many Years, and were probably persuaded of each other's Death. By what we have hitherto seen of *Joseph's* Conduct, we may suppose him to have been exceedingly touched on this Occasion. Besides a great Stock of natural Goodness and Humanity, he had a deep Sense of Religion and Piety ; and therefore cannot be supposed to have omitted any Expressions of Duty, to a Father who had loved him so tenderly.---Pity is it, that an Example of this kind is not copied out more perfectly. Many there are, who forget their Duty to their Parents, almost as soon as they get over the Difficulties of their Education : And having perhaps advanced themselves in the World, by means of those Talents, which were cultivated by their Parents Care, they drop all Concern for their Parents themselves. This is abominable ; and a Reproach, not only to Religion, but Humanity : And accordingly *St. Paul* declares, *that if any one careth not for his own, and especially those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*----And as *Joseph*, on this Occasion, behaved himself in a very becoming Manner, so the good old *Jacob*, on the other side, discovered a Tenderness, suitable to that early Affection which he had shewed
to

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to *Joseph*. Now let me die, saith he, since I have seen thy Face; because thou art yet alive. He thought nothing more remained to be enjoyed on this Side the Grave. His beloved Son had, as it were, been given him from the Dead: He not only beheld him with his own Eyes, but saw him advanced to the highest Degree of Power and Authority: And, what must prove still more agreeable to him, his Virtues were as eminent as his Station: He was designed by Providence for the Preservation of Life: And though he had been provoked by his Brethren in a most singular Manner, yet he learned to overcome Evil with Good. He obtained for them the best and most fruitful Part of *Egypt*. There were they to be supported in Plenty and Honour, till another *Pharaoh* should in Time arise: And then, the same kind Providence, by whose Conduct they had been brought down from *Canaan*, was to lead them back again, and put them in Possession of that promised Land, which flowed with Milk and Honey.

Thus far I have considered the Behaviour of *Joseph*, in reference to his Kindred. It will be proper, before I close up his History, that I should make a few Observations on his Management towards the *Egyptians*. For

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we have seen before, that the whole Direction of Affairs was placed in his Hands, in order to provide against those Difficulties, which were to be expected in the Seven Years of Famine.

It is recorded then, that when the People fainted by reason of the Famine,—they came to *Joseph*, and were supported by him, in Exchange for all their Money.----After this, they brought their Cattle to *Joseph*, that he might feed them with Bread;----and when this Stock was gone, they freely yielded up their Lands and Persons. A most deplorable Circumstance this, entirely to lose their Liberty, in order to support their Lives. But the good Management of *Joseph* turned it to their Advantage; as, by those wise Regulations, which he made on this Occasion, a Foundation was laid for their future Happiness and Prosperity.

There is one thing very remarkable in *Joseph's* Conduct, and which must not be passed over; *viz.* That whilst all others sold their Lands to *Pharaoh*, yet the Land of the Priests bought he not. For they did eat the Portion which *Pharaoh* gave them. *Joseph*, it seems, had a Notion, that the public Profession of Religion was not to be supported, without
Priests

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Priests to minister in sacred Offices ; and as these were destined to the high Employment of ministering before God, so they ought reasonably to be supported at the public Charge. Lands had been assigned for their Maintenance. But what availed this, if these Lands must be parted with in the present Distress? However that Set of sacred Officers might subsist themselves for the present, yet, by parting with their Lands, their Successors must be undone, and the Offices of Religion be neglected. It was ordered therefore, that Provision should be assigned them out of the public Stock, — and that the standing Subsistence of this sacred Order should be untouched. — This might lead me to discourse at large concerning the Reasonableness and Necessity of making sufficient legal Provisions for the Ministers of the Gospel. But the Point is too tender ; and I am sensible how little Discourses of this kind can be borne from the Pulpit. I shall therefore forbear ; and proceed rather to note some Regulations, which *Joseph* made in the *Egyptian* Constitution, in virtue of that most absolute Power which he gained.

The People of *Egypt* were, before this Time, almost entirely scattered over the Country ; by which means, having lesser

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Opportunities of conversing together,---they were not only upon many Occasions left destitute of friendly Help and Assistance, but also were rude and unpolished ; and unacquainted with those Arts, which are necessary to improve Life. To persuade them to combine together, and to unite several dispersed Families, is a most difficult Point ; and those who have succeeded in their Attempts this way, have been few. But *Joseph*, having gained the absolute Power before mentioned, employed it to promote this useful End : For it is said, *that he removed them into Cities, from one End of the Borders of Egypt, even to the other End thereof.*

In the next place, He did not take all Advantages of the Misfortunes of the People, by detaining from them their Land, and keeping their Persons in Slavery. This would have been cruel indeed. But he exercised his Power with the utmost Moderation. He reserved for *Pharaoh's* Use a Fifth Part of the Increase : All the Remainder was assigned to them and their Families : And to perpetuate this Regulation, it was made a Law over the Land of *Egypt* for future Times. Thus they were preserved for the present ; and, by the Wisdom of this excellent Governor, a Foundation

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dation was laid for lasting Happiness and Prosperity. The good Wishes of the People attended him ; and the Sense of his Services was so great, that, according to some Writers, After-ages worshipped him as *a God*. In this indeed their Gratitude became impious : For God is jealous of his Honour, and will not give it to another. But it shews the mighty Reputation which *Joseph* had acquired ; and happy would it have been for them, would they have religiously imitated that Person they superstitiously adored.

I have but little farther to offer on this History : I shall just note, that as, upon all other Occasions, *Joseph* had expressed the greatest Duty to his Father, so he religiously performed his last Will, by burying him in the Sepulchre of his Fathers. The Pomp and Solemnity was extraordinary ; and the Lamentation on that Occasion, what was due to the Memory of so good a Man as *Jacob*.— But after this Interrment, *Joseph's* Brethren, conscious of their own Crimes, became apprehensive of Vengeance. They thought a Regard to *Jacob* might hitherto have secured them ; but they were afraid that *Joseph* would now express his *Hatred towards them, and requite them all the Evil which they had*
done

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done unto him. Struck by these Fears, they applied themselves to him in the humblest manner. *We pray thee, said they, forgive the Trespas of the Sons of thy Father.* But little need was there of so much Precaution; for the good Man was so far from entertaining Sentiments of Revenge, that these Disquiets of his Brethren grieved him to the Heart. It is recorded, that *he wept when they spake unto him.* He renewed therefore all his former Promises of Favour; and accosts them in these Words, *Fear not, I will nourish you and your little ones.* Thus he proceeded on, doing all the Services he could to his Brethren; till, being wasted by Cares and Age, he was at length removed out of this World to a better.

I will but recollect his Character in a few Words, and then quit this Subject. He was designed to be the great Instrument of Providence, to support and improve the *Egyptian* State, and to save the Family of *Jacob* from utter Ruin. For this Purpose, he was not only favoured by the Supreme Being, with many supernatural Communications; but endued with every Virtue, which could either adorn Life, or fit him for the great Offices he was to sustain. In his Youth he was obedient to his Parent, and affectionate to his
Bre-

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Brethren. Of an honest, undesigning Temper; and unsuspicious of Ill in others. As he advanced in Life, he was diligent and faithful in the several Trusts committed to him; and so successful in every thing he undertook, that it is said in Scripture, that *the Lord was with him, and made every thing which he did, to prosper.* He was superior to all Temptations; and in particular resisted, with an unshaken Constancy, the repeated Sollicitations of his Mistress; till at length his Virtue brought Misfortunes on him:— But he chose rather to suffer Hardship with a good Conscience, than to flourish and prosper under a bad one. These Misfortunes he bore with Patience; supported by the Sense of his Integrity, and Favour of his God,—till, by a Train of Accidents, he was not only released from Prison, but advanced to be Commander over all *Egypt*. In this Post, he did all that could be hoped for from the most able Minister. He was sagacious to discern Events, and watchful to provide against them. To his Kindred, tender; of Injuries, forgetful: In the Service of *Pharaoh*, faithful and diligent; to the Misfortunes of the *Egyptians*, compassionate: In a word, in every Part of Life he hath set us a lovely Example. I shall

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shall close all with this Exhortation, that as you have now presented to you one of the most perfect Patterns amongst mere Men, so do ye, in all Cases in which this may be a Pattern to you, *Go and do likewise.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
Ec. Amen.

SERMON VII.

The Division of Mankind into Rich
and Poor considered.

PROV. xxii. 2.

*The Rich and Poor meet together : The Lord is
the Maker of them all.*

IN the present View of Things, we must observe a Distribution of the Goods of Life very disproportionable ; some possessing much more than either their Necessities or Conveniencies require, whilst others are, upon many Occasions, distressed and destitute.

This, to prejudiced and wrong-judging Persons, may appear unaccountable ; especially when we consider, that all Men bear the
same

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same natural Relation to God, as the Creatures of his Power, and the Subjects of his providential Care.

The wise Man, in the Text, acknowledges this Fact; for he tells us, *The Rich and Poor meet together*; — not only subsist as Inhabitants of the same common World, but Members of the same civil Society.

And what is the Reflection he makes on it? This only, *The Lord is the Maker of them all*: — The same benevolent Author of their Beings; — the same wise Disposer of their Fortunes: And so, notwithstanding present Appearances, we may be assured, *all is best upon the whole*, as being directed by the *Wiseest and Best of Beings*.

But, some Man may say, where is the Wisdom or Equity of this Proceeding? If all Men have the same natural Relation to God, why are they not provided for in the same bountiful Manner? They are Beings of the same Kind, — subject to the same Wants, — and have the same natural Desires of having these Wants supplied: Whence then is it, that Poverty subsists at all? If the World be furnished with the several Necessaries of Life, in a degree answerable to the Wants of all; why are not all Men equally Partakers of them?

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them ? I put the Case strong, in order to give it a more clear and reasonable Solution.

Now the Difficulty, which may be thought to arise on this Head, I shall endeavour to remove, by the following Steps ;

- I. It is impossible, under the present Constitution of Things, but there must be Rich and Poor ; or *the Rich and Poor must meet together.*
- II. Notwithstanding this, upon Enquiry, it will be found, that there is no great Difference, in point of Happiness, between the one and the other. And
- III. Many important Ends are answered by this Division ; and especially the general Happiness of Mankind is increased by it.

Before I proceed to the distinct Prosecution of these Heads, it may be proper to enquire, what we are to understand by the RICH and POOR ; for all Men may not perhaps be entirely agreed on this Point.

To this purpose it should be noted, that the Terms RICHES and POVERTY may be considered as *relative* ; that is, as implying a Reference to the several Possessions of different Men, when compared together,—or,
to

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to the Suitableness or Unsuitableness of their several Incomes to the Ranks they hold. Thus, Men are said to be *richer or poorer* than each other, in proportion to their greater or less Possessions: And thus likewise, that Man must be esteemed *rich*, who possesses more than his Place requires,—and another *poor*, whose Incomes are unequal to his Rank, though possibly they may answer all the Necessities of his Life, and supply him with many of its Conveniencies.

But this is not the Sense in which we should understand these Words, as they are used on the present Subject. We must here give them a Signification more absolute and determinate; such a one, as will allow us to place the *Rich* and *Poor* under two different Classes, in some sort opposed to each other; —and such a one withal, as will clearly distinguish Mankind, as they are set forth to us in the Words before us.

I think therefore we may, without Impropriety, reckon those amongst the *Rich*, who have a particular Property of their own; especially if it be considerable; and rank those under the Head of *Poor*, who, enjoying no Property, at least none of moment, are concerned to support themselves, as well as they
can,

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can, by their own Labour. For, though it must be confessed, that Persons of this lower Rank may be sometimes better circumstanced, than others who possess somewhat more of their own, yet, as an Interruption of Labour (whether through Accident or Indiscretion) may reduce them to Difficulties, and make them dependent on others, even for a Subsistence, such Persons may, without straining Matters, be reckoned under the Head of *Poor*.

On this Foot I shall proceed ; and attempt to shew, that, under the present Constitution of Things, it is impossible but there must be *Rich and Poor*.

To establish this with the greater Clearness and Certainty, we should consider the original State of Things, when the whole World lay before a few Inhabitants, unoccupied and free to every one. Property (as to Lands I mean) not being yet introduced, at that time there could be neither *Rich* nor *Poor*. Enough there was in common to supply the Wants of every one; especially at a time when these Wants were few,——and Men were fed principally by those Fruits, which the Earth of herself brought forth.

But, when Mankind increased, the Place
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where they had been at first seated being found insufficient for Support, we must suppose them (many of them, I mean) to remove; and to seek in other Places that Plenty, which had failed them in their first Abodes. Thus, by degrees, the World was peopled: And then, what was before common to all, became in many Places the Property of single Persons.

How this was introduced, and by what Steps, we shall be able to form some Notion, by considering the following Particulars.

Although in the more early Times the Earth was common, and its Fruits open to every Gatherer, yet even *then* each Man had a Property in *himself*; and of consequence in the Fruits of his own Industry and Labour. Though the Lands were free, and the spontaneous Produce of these Lands was so likewise, yet, when the Fruits were gathered, they became the Property of the Gatherer,----his own Labour in collecting them, creating this very Property. But this, which began with the Fruits of the Earth collected by the Industrious, in time was extended farther; and, upon the same general Principle, reached even to those Lands, which in former Times had been free and common to all.

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It may easily be conceived, that Lands which were originally fruitful, and of themselves produced many of the Necessaries of Life; might in time become useless to these Purposes, and be reduced to such a State, as to bring forth nothing, but by Culture and Management. On which Supposition, as Mens personal Labour intitled them to those Fruits, which were gathered by Labour, so Lands, this way improved, must, for the same Reason, become their own: And in proportion as Mens Labours this way were extended, Property likewise must be enlarged. And the first Foundation of Riches seems to have been laid in this.

Or, if it should be said, that Property in Cattle preceded that in Lands, as may be seen in the History of the *Patriarchs*, recorded in the Sacred Writings,----yet the Substance of mine Argument will be much the same. For Property, even here, was first founded in personal Labour, bestowed on the breeding up and attending these Flocks; which was afterwards enlarged, by cultivating Lands in support of them.

Now, if Property, in every View of it, was originally acquired by Industry, and consequently Men became, in this way, *Rich*;

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then we may easily see how *Poverty* likewise was introduced. For, as Contraries must always produce Contraries, so Sloth and Improvidence must effectually do the Work; especially after the World became more fully peopled, and Men were necessitated in the *Sweat of their Face to eat their Bread.* [Gen. iii. 19.]

And what, I pray, must be the Consequence of this?---What, but that those who had taken no Care to acquire Property, must become Servants to those who had it? And so we find that *Rich* and *Poor* are no modern Distinctions, but had their Rise even in the more early Ages of the World.

There was another Occasion likewise of this Distinction. For, several ingenious Arts, for the Improvement of human Life, were invented in Time, and gradually improved by succeeding Geniuses. In these each Inventer and Improver had his Advantage; and indeed every Practiser, who had learned his Art, and pursued it with Diligence. Hence a new Fund of Wealth hath been acquired by those, who were dextrous and industrious; whilst others, of lower Abilities, or more lazy Dispositions, were left behind,----and so became dependent on the more Sagacious and Active.

Property,

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Property, thus acquired, may be conveyed to others by Purchase, by Donation, or by Inheritance: Which, when conveyed, will ordinarily continue in the same Hands, whilst the Virtue and Diligence of the Possessors will maintain it: As, on the other hand, the Poverty of the Parent may be entailed on his Posterity; for where nothing was possessed, nothing can be conveyed: And it likewise often happens, that the Parent's Indolence or Ignorance, shall deprive his Children of that Instruction, which might have formed them to greater Things, and have raised them to an higher Condition in Life. Thus we see, that these Distinctions, having once obtained, must continue through succeeding Ages; and that it cannot happen, *that the Poor should ever cease out of the Land*; [Deut. xv. 11.]. For, Causes operating every-where alike, must produce every-where Effects similar.

We may account likewise for Appearances of this kind, from another Consideration: For, those who are once possessed of Property, may either forfeit it, in the way of Punishment,---or be deprived of it, by Fraud or Violence,---or may dissipate their Fortunes, in consequence of their own Vices or Follies,---or, lastly, may be sunk by some extraor-

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dinary bad Accident in Life. And where none of these Causes operate, yet the Division of larger Property amongst numerous Children or Dependents, must occasion such moderate Assignments to each, as may in the next Generation, by this Reduction of Wealth, occasion an Approach to Poverty; and the Persons possessed of these small Assignments, may, without a good deal of Management, be forced to change their Class, and to rank even with the Poor.

It may farther be observed, that from the Principles before laid down, the greater Part of Mankind will be ranked in this lower Class, —or that the *Poor* will be far more numerous than the *Rich*. For, when Countries were more fully peopled, as it must fall to the Share of a few only to be sagacious and diligent, and to find Opportunities of making the best Advantage of both, so the few only will be capable of raising themselves to Figure and Fortune; others, the mean while, through Slowness of Apprehension, or Unambitiousness of Temper, or perhaps several other Defects, being left behind them, are gradually sinking, till they have fixed themselves at length amongst the lowest Part of Mankind. Appearances of this kind may be discerned
even

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even farther back than profane History can carry us. We may see them in the very Times of *Abraham* ; who, though the Father only of One Family, had numerous Dependents : And the whole Property being vested in himself, these Dependents were, in Strictness, Servants ; and, agreeably to the Signification before given of the Term, POOR.

If the Point I am upon be not sufficiently cleared by the Reflections already offered, we may see, that the Division of Men into *Rich* and *Poor* is unavoidable, from considering distinctly the Nature of Man, and the ordinary Condition of the World.

Man, though he possesses the Power of Reason, yet doth not often exercise this Power to any important Purpose :----Though he be a moral Agent, and as such capable of doing right or wrong, yet he more frequently doth wrong, in some respect or other, than right : We see, on these Accounts, a sad Prevalency of Error and Vice. We see farther, that although every Man loves himself, yet he seldom pursues his own Interest in earnest, ----being byassed by certain inward Dispositions, which counteract such Pursuits, and either prevent or disappoint them. Now, from such a Condition of Mankind in gene-

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ral, what can be expected?----That Men, without Discretion, should act as wisely as those who have it?----That Men, without Virtue, should obtain the same Rewards with those who follow it?----That those, who scarce ever pursue, even what they wish, should be on the same Foot with others, who, chusing rightly, follow this Choice with Activity and Vigour? If Effects of this kind cannot be expected from Persons so circumstanced, pray how can it happen, that the Generality of Mankind should acquire Wealth? ---An End not to be obtained, but by the Exertion of those Qualities, in which they are most deficient.

And if they are without the very Means of acquiring it, or deprive themselves of these Means, can it be expected that the Course of Nature should be altered on their Account? For that must be the Case, on this Supposition; the common Order of Causes and Effects requiring, that the Dispensation before us should be just such as we find it to be. God governs the World according to those Rules which he at first established, without breaking in upon the Wills of Men. According to these, Virtue, Discretion, and Industry, must generally produce the same good Effects;--

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Effects ;—must always tend to them ;—and indeed never fail, but by Occasion of what we call Accidents. These indeed are out of our Reach ; but being resolveable into God's wise Pleasure, can be no Rules for general Computation. So in like manner, the Absence of Virtue, Discretion and Industry, must prevent Consequences, which can flow only from a contrary Cause ; since God will not, in his ordinary Course, give a Force to any thing beyond its own natural Tendency : And hence it is unavoidable, but these Two Sorts of Persons, the *Rich* and *Poor*, must meet together.

After all, there is one Thing which still deserves Attention. As the *Rich* may reduce themselves to Poverty by wrong Conduct, so the *Poor* may raise themselves by Virtue and Industry :—May do so, I mean, where they enjoy Liberty ; which is the Case of every one under the happy Constitution of this Country. Here every Subject, as being free, is capable of acquiring and holding Property. And therefore it must be no small Comfort to reflect, that, however low his Circumstances may be for the present, yet a Way is still open for improving them,—and that his Posterity perhaps, may hereafter adorn even

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the higher Stations of Life. This Consideration must abate of that Uneasiness, which Poverty may be thought to carry with it: And if it should not make Men strictly *contented* with it, should at least induce them to be resigned and *patient* under it.

II. But this will be carried much farther in what is intended under my SECOND Head, *viz.* That there is no great Matter of Difference, in point of Happiness, between the *Rich* and the *Poor*.

For the more clear Explication of this Article, it should be remembered, that the general State of Rich and Poor, in the Comparison we are making, must be considered; with the Advantages or Disadvantages proper to each, as flowing from their respective Conditions. We have no Concern therefore either with extraordinary Accidents, or with those Consequences, which are owing rather to wrong Conduct, than the general State they are placed in.

Thus, if the Poor are sometimes reduced to Extremities, yet this is by no means the necessary Consequence of their Rank. If it be owing to the Badness of the Seasons---to the accidental Scarcity of Provisions,----to
Want

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Want of Employment, or the like, the Rich likewise are hereby Sufferers: And the Reliefs, which the Humanity of such Fellow-sufferers disposes them to afford, will render such Accidents supportable.

Thus again, if the Difficulties they may be reduced to have been owing to their Sloth, or Improvidence, or Extravagancy, these ought not to be charged to the Account of their general Condition: For, Industry would have supported them in a way by no means disagreeable; Carefulness in laying up what exceeded their daily Necessities, would have guarded against such coming Difficulties; but Extravagance may not only dissipate their lesser Stores (if such they have)--but in Time get the better of the greatest and most affluent Fortunes.

These Cases therefore being thrown out of the present Question, let us now see, whether there be any great Matter of Difference, in point of Happiness, between the Rich and the Poor.

To the imperfect Considerer it may seem, that the Rich have, in this Question, a great Advantage. Wealth opens the Way to Honour and Power, the great Aims of the Ambitious: The bare Consciousness of possessing
Wealth,

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Wealth, must administer some Sort of Satisfaction: This renders Men independent of others;—enables them to do as they please;—to pursue Entertainments out of the Reach of other Men; and to enjoy them likewise as often as they chuse to do so.

Allowing all this, yet no mighty Matter can arise from it. What is this Honour, unless rightly obtained and properly enjoyed, more than the being placed in a conspicuous View, in which they are gazed at by some, and laughed at by others?—What is Power, without attending to its proper Exercise, but the Opportunity of doing Mischief?—What is the Consciousness of possessing Wealth, without using it, but a Consciousness of not deserving it?—What doth it import, that we are independent on others, when, in many Cases, it is an Happiness to be dependent?—Of what Consequence is it, that we can do as we please, when the doing so is a Misfortune, and cannot itself please us?—What is it to follow Pleasure, when it ends in Pain; and the oftener it is pursued, will the oftener disappoint our Expectations? This is what the Happiness of the *Rich*, merely considered as such, amounts to.

On the other hand, the Advantages before-
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mentioned, as they are called, may not at all enter into that Happiness which the Poor pursues. As Things of this kind are out of his Reach, he gives none Attention to them. Others he will respect in an honourable Station, without wishing for it himself. Power he submits to, sensible perhaps of his own Insufficiency for the Exercise of Power. As to Wealth, he finds Nature requires but little : With that Little he is content. He enjoys what he hath. If he had more, perhaps he would not enjoy it : And then what signifies the Possession ? To satisfy the ordinary Cravings of Nature in the simplest Manner, affords him a much higher Satisfaction, than the Man of Pleasure ever tastes of. His very Labours are none other, than what the great Man takes Refuge in, for the sake of what he calls Sports or Diversions : And if there be other Amusements less laborious, in which the Wealthy are apt to indulge themselves, yet the more brisk and active common People, as they have no Relish of them, are apt even to despise them.

It deserves farther to be noted, that a great Part of what the Wealthy possesses, is in some sort common to others ; perhaps it is of such a Nature, that his own Enjoyment of it, will,
in

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in a great measure, consist in making it common. Thus, for Instance, the over-grown rich Man can apply to his own personal Purpose a very small Portion of what he holds. Though the Property be strictly his, yet the greater Part of it is enjoyed by others,---by his Servants,---his Dependents,---his Neighbours,---by those, who holding no Property of their own, are, in our present Account, Poor.

Let me ask again, What is the Enjoyment of the Elegancies of Buildings, Furniture, Prospects; and, in general, the other Works of Art? Doth not Familiarity deaden the Taste of them, which was chiefly owing to Novelty? And are not all these likewise, in a good Degree, open as well to the lower Part of Mankind as to the higher? The greatest Difference between these Two Ranks will arise from hence, that the Higher have the Expence and Trouble of contriving them, whilst the Lower are concerned only in the Pleasure of enjoying them. So far as this, there doth not seem to be any Advantage on the Part of the Wealthy.

But it may be thought, that the Comparison will have a different Effect, if it regard the Sufferings, to which the Rich and Poor are respec-

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respectively exposed ; the one Sort seeming, from the very Nature of their Situation, to be on the suffering Side,----and less able to support themselves in it, or to remove themselves out of it. However, let us examine the Case fairly.

The Poor, then, are more free from *inward* Uneasinesses than the Rich. Having fewer Desires, they must have fewer Disquiets;--less Sollicitude in their Pursuits;—less Anxiety in their present State;—and less Apprehension about what shall happen. And yet Disquiets of these kinds are no little Abatements of Happiness.

However, it may be said, that the Poor labour under particular Disadvantages in relation to Health,—to the Conveniencies, and even the Necessaries, of Life. Still, if this be carefully looked into, the Difference between Rich and Poor may not appear considerable.

In point of Health, I think the Poor have an Advantage; the Temperance and Exercise to which their very Professions oblige them, being great Preventives of those bodily Disorders, to which the Indolence and Luxury of the Rich expose them. And though in Case of Sickness in fact happening to the Poor,

some

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some Difficulties may arise, yet *their* Remedies are simple, and more easily obtained ;--- by those Provisions at least, which the Humanity of the present Age hath furnished. Persons in such Circumstances are befriended by almost every one, and relieved by others, when they are not capable of relieving themselves.

In point of Conveniencies, a Difference there may be ; but not such a one as will greatly affect Happiness. Perhaps it may not be easy to settle what are properly Conveniencies in the lower Stations ; for that may be such to one, which is not reckoned so by another ; and that which any one doth not so much as chuse, can hardly be esteemed a Convenience.

The most important Point is behind, which relates to Necessaries. But then we should remember, that Cases of extreme Want, as being extraordinary, do not properly belong to our present Subject. If they are owing to a Man's own Fault, he must thank himself. If to Accident, such likewise may befall any one ; and, not being peculiar to the Poor in their general State, cannot be charged to the Account of that State. And besides, Remedies of some Sort are provided by the common

mon Laws of our Country,---by the Bounty of the Generous,---and by the good Offices of the Charitable. Under such Reliefs, a modest and patient Mind may well support a Man; especially in the latter End of Life (which at the best is no Season for Enjoyment),---and when, weary of this World, he is just entering on the Possession of a better. These Things being laid together, we shall have no Reason to think that the general State of the Poor is so uncomfortable, as to support, or even countenance the least Objection against the Equity of Providence.

III. But this may appear in a Light yet stronger under my last Head, by shewing, that several important Ends are answered by the present Dispensation; and especially, that the general Happiness is increased by it.

The lower Part of Mankind have been complaining of their Condition in several Ages; and, instead of using the proper Means for improving it, have formed a kind of leveling Scheme to themselves,---willing to suppose that this would set all at rights.

Let us consider it a little; we shall then see, that this, so far from removing their Complaints, would only increase them. So badly do they judge for themselves! and so much better is it to be disposed of by the Will of

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God, than to be the Carvers of their own Fortunes !

Let us suppose then, that the now-mentioned levelling Scheme were to take Place. Let the great Properties of the Rich be immediately divided amongst the Poor, and the Equality, so much wished for, procured : What must be the Consequence ?

It will surprise Men to consider, how little must fall to each Man's Share upon this equal Division : For if there are, upon the most moderate Computation, above Fifty to One in the lower Class, what must an equal Division of Property produce ?— Especially, after we discount those Properties of the Rich, which, instead of being advantageous, must prove Incumbrances to the Receivers ;—such are, sumptuous Buildings,----rich Furniture, ---the several Elegancies of Art,---the Ornaments of Dress,---with several other Provisions, suitable only to the higher Life.—— I think I am now speaking to the Capacities of the very meanest of those who hear me. Judge ye therefore what I say ;----Would any of these Things be esteemed of consequence ? Would they not be thrown aside, as inconvenient in that low Equality they have chosen ?

Now if very little would be got by this
Change,

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Change, let us see what must unavoidably be lost by it. They might perhaps please themselves for a while ; but could this Pleasure last long ? Could it last longer, than till they had consumed every thing capable of Consumption ? And then how would they be able to support themselves ?

Why, by the Lands which remained, and were immoveable: Be it so. But what Quantity of Land, upon a fair Division, would there fall to each Man's Share ? And, be it what it will, how shall it be cultivated and improved ?----Not by Persons hired : For every one having Property of his own to manage, no one could be at leisure to assist others ; or if he were so, can we think he would be disposed to do it ? This would be a falling back into the very State of which he complained before. And besides, as every Man, on this Supposition, having Property of his own, would be engaged in cultivating that Property, all must be reduced to the State of Husbandmen. And what then must become of the several Arts of Life ? The Profession of these being deserted, each Man must likewise be his own Artificer, his own Builder, his own Manufacturer. Upon such a foot, how completely must he be furnished

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out ! If it be said, that the Superfluities of one Man in one Kind, may be exchanged for others in another Kind ;—this may hold in reference to the bare Produce of their Lands, —but cannot extend to other things, which are the Works only of Art ; whilst no Arts can possibly be carried on in these Circumstances. Without using many Words, I think, the immediate Consequence of this Scheme must be, the Introduction of the extremest Ignorance and Poverty,---aggravated by this farther Circumstance, that the Persons, so reduced, will have no wise Man to direct them, ---no rich Man to support them,---and no good Man to pity them ; for, if any good Man should yet remain, he could only justify the Righteousness of Providence, in punishing Men at their own Request.

Suppose we farther, that being made sensible of their Folly, by the Miseries they had brought upon themselves, they should bethink themselves how to repair their Fault : ---Could they find any other Way, than by returning gradually to their former Condition ?—than by permitting Property again to be accumulated by those, who were fitted to procure it ;—than by contenting themselves with Employments under those, who should
acquire

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acquire such Property ;—by the Restoration of the banished Arts ;—and by resolving to try no more such fatal Experiments? This would do something indeed : And if they should have learnt likewise to be virtuous, modest, industrious, frugal, and contented, they would find themselves possessed of something more valuable than Wealth ;—which, lodged in proper Hands, and rightly managed, is of more Consequence to the *Poor*, who are employed or relieved by it, than to the *Rich*, who are only the Possessors of it. We may see, even by this, for what wise Ends the present Constitution of Things was framed ; and how much it is the Interest even of the Poor themselves to support this Constitution.

This Matter may be carried farther into several Particulars, which will make our general Conclusion more apparent.

Thus, the Division of Men into Rich and Poor, is the Ground likewise of another Distinction, — of that between Superiors and Inferiors ; for such a one must originally have its principal Foundation in this. Remove this Distinction, and how shall we support Government? — perfect Government, I mean, in which general Laws are enacted, and a

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general Obedience required? Who will be induced to obey a Person no way superior to themselves; one neither able to reward their Duty, nor to punish their Disobedience? And how could such a Person carry on the Affairs of Government, without Substitutes proportionably superior to those they are appointed to rule? See! what happens in half-formed States,---in lesser Clans,---and where Rudeness in every respect prevails. The Governor (for so he may be called) is rather nominal than real; without tolerable Authority to command, and without Power to enforce. Upon this Foot, it must be impossible to answer any substantial End intended by Government.

The same Division into Rich and Poor, which is necessary to support Government, hath an equal Influence on social Good,---or the Interest of Persons connected together for the Prosecution of mutual Concerns. Take an Instance of this in Commerce; which cannot be carried on but by a Variety of Persons both of superior and inferior Rank. In every Branch relating to this, there are *lower* as well as higher Duties. Now, who would be allowed the *higher*, or who would submit to the *lower*, if all Men were upon the same Foot,--

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Foot,---i. e. if there were no such Ranks as the *Rich* and *Poor*? Indeed, without Wealth in the Hands of *some*, how could the *Materials* for Commerce be collected? And unless others were poor, how could they be prepared? If the one are necessary as Purchasers, the other must likewise be so as Manufacturers. The same, which hath been observed in this particular Instance, may be applied to every similar Case; and I shall trust the good Sense of my Hearers in applying it.

One thing farther should be observed, in some sort to be collected from what I have advanced before, *viz.* that the personal Interests of all sorts of Men are best secured, by supporting the Division now treated of. The Case of the Rich I shall not insist on. It will be allowed me, and it will be a very easy Matter to shew, that the Poor are as much concerned in supporting it, as the Rich. For, were there no *Rich*, whom would the *Poor* have to employ them?---Whom to direct them?---Whom to relieve them, in Cases where they want Relief? If they shall say, Were all Rich, they would then need neither Employment, nor Direction, nor Relief,---I desire that what hath been already advanced, concerning the Equality of Fortune, may be

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remembered. It is true, there would *then* be no Employments at all, but those in which each Man would employ himself, and for himself only. There would then be no Directions to follow,---because none to direct or even advise. But, Reliefs would be wanted in a much greater Degree than ever, without any Possibility of receiving them: For, where all are equally miserable, it is inconceivable that any one should be able to relieve another.

The Truth is, Men are not formed for such a State of Equality and Independency, as weak Persons may be apt to dream. God hath made us not merely for ourselves, but for one another. Some are formed with Abilities to rise; and, being risen, to direct the Operations of inferior Persons. Others are furnished with active Powers, conducive to their own, and to the public Good, under such proper Direction. Both may be mutually helpful to each other. Both are equally necessary to each other. And, at the same time that, by their just Co-operations, they promote each other's Good, they are subservient likewise to Providence, in the carrying on its most wise and benevolent Designs.

From what hath been advanced, several Conclusions might properly be drawn. I shall

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shall just mention Two; one of them respecting the *Rich*, and another the *Poor*.

In reference to the *Rich*, we should conclude from what I have now delivered, that all kinds of Insolence towards the *Poor* must be highly criminal. For, the Distinction between Rich and Poor, arising from the very Constitution of Things, and being carried on by the Influence of Providence, must, in some Sense, be of Divine Original. The very Text saith, *God is the Maker of them both*. And since both Sorts are equally under God's Care, the one can have no Pretence to misuse or insult the other. We all of us enjoy the same Nature; and are, so far, upon an equal Foot. And though the Difference of outward Circumstances may have rendered some dependent on others, yet it should be remembered, that as the original *Equality by Nature* still remains, there is likewise added to it another *Equality by Grace*; I mean, an equal Share in the Rights and Privileges of the Gospel. In consequence of this, the meanest Person living may be a *Child of God*, and an *Inheritor of Heaven*: And if he becomes our Superior in Holiness, he will maintain that Superiority over us to all Eternity.

In reference to the Poor I would conclude,
that

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that they are under strong Obligations to submit to their present Condition, without Murmur or Complaint. From what hath been said, it must appear, there is no manner of Reason for Complaint on this Head; such a Portion of Happiness being attainable by them, even in their lowest State, as is suitable to their Condition here,---especially when it is considered, that they are not settled Inhabitants of *this* World, but only Travelers on to a better. They are enabled by present Provisions to go on in their respective Duties; and to earn, by the Discharge of them, greater Honours, and greater Happiness than this World can give them. Let them wait therefore with Patience. If there be any thing grievous still upon them, God will remove it in his due Time: If not, as they may wish, by a full Relief in this World, yet at least in another; For, they shall be abundantly *recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just.*

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SERMON VIII.

Reflections on the Conduct of HEROD
toward JOHN the Baptist.

PART I.

MATT. xiv. 6, 7, 8, 9.

*But when Herod's Birth-day was kept, the
Daughter of Herodias danced before them,
and pleased Herod.*

*Whereupon he promised with an Oath to give her
whatsoever she would ask.*

*And she, being instructed of her Mother, said,
Give me here John Baptist's Head in a
Charger.*

*And the King was sorry; nevertheless for the
Oath sake, and them that sat with him at
Meat, he commanded it to be given her.*

FROM the Third Verse of this Chapter to
the Thirteenth, we have the Account of
a remarkable Piece of History, relating
to the Life and Conduct of *Herod*; in which
there is such a Series of Errors, all occasioned
origi-

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nally by one extravagant Passion, as ought to make us for-ever cautious, how we give way to those Desires we may not afterwards be able to restrain.

The Character of *John* the Baptist was so well known to *Herod*, that he could not but pay him great Degrees of Reverence ; and he seemed to be so sensible of his acting by an extraordinary Commission, that he was attentive to his Instructions, and for some time directed his Life by the Precepts which he received from him. Thus *St. Mark* tells us, [ch. vi. ver. 20.] *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just Man and holy ; and observed him ; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly.*

One might hope indeed, that upon such a Foundation as this, much might have been built. One might hope that *Herod* (since he was convinced of the Piety, and Wisdom, and Authority of the Prophet), would have been influenced entirely by his Instructions. But, a mad and extravagant Passion blinded him : And he was so little Master of himself, that, instead of profiting by the Reproofs of the Prophet, he persecuted the Reprover.

The Case, in short, was this ;---*Herod* had conceived a violent Affection for his Brother *Philip's* Wife, and had given such way

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to it, that, notwithstanding all the Remonstrances, whether of Reason or Religion, he seduced her from her Husband.

This scandalous Practice of Incest and Adultery, we might well suppose, could not escape the Censure of the Baptist. He discharged his Duty with a becoming Freedom, and plainly told him, *It was not lawful for him to have her.*

Angered by this Admonition, and unable either to correct his Manners, or to restrain his Rage, he discharged himself immediately on the Admonisher. It is said, *He laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in Prison.*

Being thus freed from the uneasy Reproofs of the Prophet, he gave himself up to his sinful and abominable Passion. This gradually led him from one false Step to another; till at last he was prevailed on to commit an Act, which he could not formerly have thought of without Horror.

If there be any Occasion to enter into the Particulars of his Proceeding, we may observe, *That when Herod's Birth-day was celebrated, the Daughter of that Herodias (with whom Herod had kept a criminal Correspondence) bare no small Share in the Solemnity.*

It

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It is said, that *She danced before them, and pleased Herod.*

I shall not enquire at present, whether this were entirely agreeable to the Strictness and Severity of the *Jewish* Customs;—nor, whether the Word here rendered [*danced*] doth not in the Original imply something *indecent**: Without insisting largely on any thing of that Nature, it may be observed, that on this Occasion *Herod* gave himself up to too profuse and intemperate a Joy: Otherwise he would not have made so hasty and extravagant a Promise. He would not, for the sake of a young Person's performing her Part in the Diversion of that Day, have engaged to gratify whatever Request she should make to him,—unknowning which Way her Inclinations might lead, and in what Difficulties he might involve himself.-----But, it seems, the extravagant Passion he had conceived for the Mother, occasioned a foolish Fondness for the Daughter. This, amidst the unguarded Licence of a Day of Mirth, carried *Herod* beyond just Bounds. He was so far pleased, and, as it were, intoxicated on the Occasion, that he knew not how sufficiently to reward her. He therefore promised, and confirmed that Promise by an

* *Vid. Erasmus & Grotium inter Criticos.*

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Oath, *That he would give her whatever she would ask.*

This leads me to another bad Step in the Conduct of *Herod*; the entering into a rash and ill-weighed Engagement; an Engagement to perform, not what he himself should judge to be lawful, fit and proper,—but what should prove most agreeable to the vain and uncertain Wishes of the very Person, to whom he made the Promise. This certainly (had there been nothing more in it) must be censured by every thinking Man; because it must expose him to vast Difficulties and Inconveniencies.—But to confirm it by the Solemnity of an Oath;—to make a venerable and sacred Rite the Bond of his own Folly, was an adding of Profaneness to Indiscretion, and a trifling with Religion, as well as common Sense.

Thus must it have appeared, even though the Event had been different from what it afterwards proved to be. Though the Request should have proved innocent, and such as a wise and good Man might reasonably give way to,—yet still, the Promise being made in such general Terms, [*to give whatever she would ask*] Room was left for making Demands both unreasonable and sinful. On
this

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this Foot we may determine, that the Engagement itself (whatever should be the Consequence), was from the very Beginning criminal and impious.

It is not to be wondered, if a Proceeding so bad in the Beginning, should be answered by an Event as bad. The Damsel desired no less a Reward than the Head of *John Baptist*, prompted to it by the Resentments of her Mother, whose Incest had been reprov'd by him. See here ! the Consequence of *Herod's* Promise. He must now either falsify his Oath, or prove the Murderer of the Prophet.

This, as we may suppose, gave him no small Uneasiness. He reflected, no doubt, with what Pleasure he had heretofore heard his Preaching. He considered the Piety of the Man, and the Authority of the Prophet : Whom, though he had deprived of Liberty, yet he feared to rob of his Life. The Text tells us, he was sorry on the Occasion. But, he knew not how to clear himself of those Difficulties, in which he was involved.

The real State of the Matter was this ; the Oath itself was sinful : And when the Demand made was unlawful to be gratified, the Oath could have no manner of Obligation. For no irregular Act of ours can make
that

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that lawful, which is in itself unlawful, —or bind us to perform what we must censure and condemn ourselves for performing.

Had *Herod* considered the Matter in this View, he would not have beheaded the Baptist : He would not have added one Sin to another, —nor have aggravated the Sinfulness of his Oath, by the Commission of a Murderer.—But he had promised, and sworn, it seems, before a public Company : His Word was given, and his Credit interested : The Company perhaps pressed the Matter ;—Persons he cared not to disoblige at such a Season : And so he gratified the Request of his Favourites, at the Expence of his Conscience. The Words in the Text are, *The King was sorry ; nevertheless, for the Oath sake, and them who sat with him at Meat, he commanded it [i. e. the Head of John Baptist] to be given* *her.*

I shall offer some Reflections on this Piece of History ; and such as, I conceive, may be useful to us in the Conduct of Life. For, this is observable, that we may draw Advantage as well from the Errors as the Virtues of Mankind : And by noting in what they have failed, may learn to frame wiser

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Schemes of Management for ourselves. Such Characters are delivered down to us, not to be imitated, but abhorred ; *and are written, as the Apostle tells us, for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.* [1 Cor. x. 11.]

Now, the First thing I would observe, on Occasion of the present History, is this ; that the giving ourselves up to any one irregular Passion or Desire, is not only, upon its own Account, highly displeasing to God,—but will have such an Influence upon our Lives, that our Innocence and Virtue shall be in no Instance secure. This we see plainly in the Conduct of *Herod* ; who was so over-mastered by his Passion for *Herodias*, that he stuck at nothing to which that Passion led him. He was drawn on from one Piece of ill Conduct to another,——till at last he ventured on the Murder of that Prophet, who had reproved his Excesses.

I shall not here insist on this barely, that the same God who forbids one Crime, equally forbids another ; and therefore, that the Indulgence of any one criminal Desire, must be highly displeasing to him : This, though a Consideration which much deserves our Regard, I just mention at present, and go on

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to observe, that no one can be secure of maintaining his Virtue in any Instance, who doth not resolve to support and maintain it in all.

Every Man knows, who knows any thing at all of the Matter, that there is a close Connexion between the several Vices. One ever draws on, or at least makes Way for the Entrance of, another : This introduces a Third, which perhaps was not at first thought of. And when the Breach on Mens Innocence is made so wide, it lies exposed to every Attack, which their great Adversary may make upon them.

There is something indeed in the very Ground and Foundation of Sin, which may serve to clear up this Matter. It implies a Contempt of, or a Disregard to, the Authority of God : Because, if the Sense of God's Majesty were the universal and ruling Principle, we could not sacrifice the Honour of our Maker to the Indulgence of our own vain Passions. Now if this Principle, which I may call the great Influencer of Virtue and Obedience, be insufficient to restrain us in any one Particular, what Security is there, that it shall be more effectual in another ? And if Men abstain from a particular Vice, not through a Regard to God,----but purely because they

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have no Temptations to the committing it, their Virtue itself can last no longer than the Absence of Temptations. They are prepared therefore, in such a Case as this, for every Vice, to which Occasions and Opportunities may prompt them: And, of consequence, there can be no guarding against any Sin, but by disclaiming all. This, I say, must arise from hence, that the original Root of all Vice (*viz.* a Contempt of Divine Authority) is one and the same. All Vices therefore, as being derived from the same Cause, are nearly allied to each other: They will not be long separated; but where one gains a fixed and settled Possession, it must open the Way to others.

I am persuaded, that the Point before us may be supported and made good on this general Foot of arguing. But yet I shall chuse rather to illustrate and confirm it in another Way. I shall take a distinct View of some of the more ruling Passions amongst Men; and shew in what Way, and by what Steps, they lead us on to every thing else that is ill.

The first I would mention, is Pride and Ambition; a Conceit of superior Advantages, and a Desire of some higher Station. He who yields himself up to this, is led into all those

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those Measures, by which the Passion may be gratified. Hence is he unjust to the Merits of others, which he apprehends may eclipse his own; upon any Success he meets with, insolent; and upon any Disappointment, unmerciful. He is so wrapt up in his own vain Self, that he loses all proper Regard to others; and gradually puts off the Sentiments, as well of Humanity as Justice. He will run himself into contradictory Vices on different Occasions; and act in the most abject manner, to gain that Power, which he exercises with Haughtiness and Tyranny when obtained. To be short, it is hardly possible to assign any Vice, into which Men may not be betrayed by the Passion before us.

Take another Instance in that of Covetousness; by which I would be understood to mean, such an irregular Love of Wealth, as leads Men to be either tenacious of their own, or desirous of another Man's; rapacious in getting, or penurious in enjoying. Can we be secure, that such a Person as this will be true to his Word, or just in his Dealings, when an Advantage shall be thereby lost? Will he put himself to any Charges, either to serve his Neighbour, or to advantage the Public, unless some greater private Advantage shall

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shall immediately arise? Will he be merciful to others, who is cruel to himself? Or rather, Is there any thing he would be apt to stick at, when Interest shall call upon him? If we can doubt this, we may satisfy ourselves from the Conduct of *Abah*,—who, to gratify this unreasonable Passion, made no Scruple either of Subornation, or of Murder; and of a Murder too, committed with the very worst Aggravation, under the specious Shew of Justice. Hear what *St. Paul* delivers on this Head; *They that will be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.---For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil; which, whilst some have coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows.* [1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.]

Others there are, in whom the original Seeds, whether of Ambition or Covetousness, are not so apparent. These perhaps may seem to be both modest and generous; neither affecting great Matters themselves, nor sparing of that Assistance, which they are capable of affording others. Yet they cannot bear a supposed Injury. Being not conscious of offering Ill to others, they know not how to en-
dure

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duce it themselves. Their Resentments are quickly kindled. They become passionate and fierce,—and at length malicious and revengeful. What Pity is it, that such commendable Qualities should be rendered useless, by giving way to one intemperate Passion! And yet, when this Humour hath got Possession, there is hardly any ill Consequence which may not be feared from it. Friends are betrayed, in order to crush an Enemy; and the Public often suffers through private Feuds and Animosities. The resentful Person is often angry for very slight, or perhaps no Causes;----sometimes for Services unseasonably offered, or foolishly misunderstood. The Aversion founded on these wrong Grounds is often the stronger, by how much the Grounds of it were less justifiable. Reconcilement becomes impracticable. Revenge must be executed at all Events: And every other Engagement is made to give way to it. Behold, *how great Matter a little Fire kindleth!*

Once more, and to come nearer home to the Case of *Herod*, the Occasion of the present Reflection; what hath been noted concerning several other Passions, will be found equally true in the Love of Pleasure, when

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once it becomes irregular. In general, it unbends the Mind,—and renders it unfit either to attempt what is truly great, or to bear what may prove grievous. As it affects *Self* immediately (for no one feels private Pleasure beside a Man's self), so it produces in us a narrow and contracted Spirit. It destroys both Charity and Generosity; and indisposes a Man either to serve his Friend, or the Public. It gathers Strength every Day; till at last a Man is entirely lost to it;—incapable of resisting it on any Occasion, even though immediate Ruin present itself before him, or eternal Damnation threaten him. Nothing can stand between the voluptuous Man and his Enjoyments. *Herod* could no longer bear his Favourite the Baptist, when he declared against his Pleasures; and he was at last carried on so far, as to commit Murder, to avoid the Reproofs he was unable to endure.

It would be too tedious to speak distinctly of every other Passion, or Desire. This only I shall farther observe, in reference to all of them, that whenever any thing of this kind becomes a ruling Principle within us, it draws every thing to itself;—hath an Influence on every Action; and, as the Helm in a Vessel, turneth

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turneth us which way soever it pleaseth. So that if a Man be once lost to any criminal Passion (whatsoever it be), neither he, nor any one else can say, where he shall make a Stand.

It concerns us therefore, if we bear any Reverence to God,---have any Love of Virtue,---any Desire of Happiness,---any Dread of Misery,---to take heed in the Beginning, and to stop the first Growth of every corrupt Passion.---Or, if we have proved so unhappy, as to have given way to it hitherto, it becomes us to retreat with Speed; that we may not, as *Herod* was, be in time so far enslaved, as to be forced on Expedients, we scarce know how to avoid or bear.

2. I shall pass on to a Second Reflection on this Piece of History. It hath been observed before, in the Account of *Herod's* Conduct, that, in the Celebration of his Birth-Day, he gave himself up to too profuse and intemperate a Joy. By this he lost the due Command of himself on that Occasion; and was led into such a Piece of foolish Extravagance, as to promise the Daughter of *Herodias*, to grant *her whatsoever she would ask*. From the Incident before us, we ought to learn this Instruction; viz. To have the most watchful Care of ourselves, even in the Enjoyment

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joyment of those Diversions, which are innocent and laudable.

Herod is not, and cannot be, blame d for celebrating his Birth-day. This was a Matter innocent enough ; and, if rightly managed, of religious Use and Importance. It not only affords an Opportunity for cultivating a better Understanding with Friends or Acquaintance, but is in some sort an Expression of Gratitude to God, by whose Goodness it was that we first saw the Light, and by whose kind Providence we still enjoy that Being which was at first bestowed upon us. Whilst these Ends are kept in View,—and Matters are so ordered, that nothing is done inconsistent with them, Solemnities of this kind are highly commendable. But if they shall degenerate, and prove the Occasions of Intemperance, they will become so much the more blameable, as they were intended for better and nobler Purposes.

But it is the Misfortune of Men, that on such Occasions as these,—and indeed in the Enjoyment of any kind of Diversion or Entertainment, they are apt to be carried too far. They forget the true Use of it. And if they do not transgress in the more gross and more notorious Instances, yet they give way

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way to such a Diffipation of Thought, such a Heedleſſneſs of Behaviour, as betrays them into great and important Difficulties.

The leaſt that may be apprehended from ill-managed Diverſion is, that it unbends the Mind too much ;---that it indiſpoſes us for ſerious and ſober Reflection ;---that it creates an Averſion to Pains and Labour : And, if it be repeated too often, impreſſes on our Minds ſuch a quick Senſe of Pleaſure, as we may not be able readily to maſter.

Yet this is not what I have principally in View at preſent. I am to caution Men now againſt the more direct and immediate Conſequences of an ill Conduct in this Particular,---againſt the Follies of an unguarded Joy,---and the Sins which are too often the Conſequence of theſe Follies.

How often is it ſeen, that Men, in theſe looſer Hours, throw off the Reſtraints of Decency and Modeſty ;---indulge themſelves in vaſt Liberties, both of Speech and Action ;---affront their Friends, or provoke their Enemies ;---ſay what they are aſhamed to remember,---and act what will not,---what cannot, be forgotten ! All this ariſes from hence, that they think Wiſdom and Prudence have nothing to do in the Caſe, but that Di-
verſion

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version necessarily carries with it a Licence to play the Fool.

The Persons most liable to err in this respect, are the giddy and unexperienced Youth; those who know little, and fear less; and who, meaning no Ill themselves, are therefore inapprehensive of Consequences. Too much Diversion to such, is a very dangerous Thing: And they should be taught early, either to avoid it as much as possible, or else to enjoy it with great Reserve and Moderation.

To say the Truth, most of the Corruptions, which have afterward appeared to the Disgrace and Ruin of many Men, have been owing originally to a Want of Caution in this Particular. It is this which makes ill Company so very hazardous. Persons of modest and virtuous Dispositions, by thinking themselves at Liberty to abate somewhat of their Reserve in the Diversions of Conversation, are gradually lost. Their Minds, now open to bad Impressions, lose the Horror they once had of Vice. They are tainted before they are aware; and at length led on to the grossest Instances of Wickedness.

But however this should prove, yet still, I say, unless Men carry a great deal of Prudence and Caution with them, there are numberless
wrong

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wrong Things into which their Diversions may betray them :--Things either improper, or perhaps criminal, and highly prejudicial to Virtue and Religion.

Holy *Job* was so sensible of this, that he suspected some Errors in the Conduct of his Sons, on their festival Occasions. He suspected it even in those, who had been doubtless educated with Strictness enough, and could not want the best Instructions of so pious a Father. Thus we are informed in his History, that *when the Days of their Feasting were gone about, Job sent and sanctified them; and rose up early in the Morning, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all. For Job said, It may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God in their Hearts. [Job. i. 5.]* So jealous and suspicious was this wise and excellent Person, that every thing would not be ordered aright, when Men are apt to throw off their Guard, and that Virtue, on such Occasions, would suffer no small Hazard! How much therefore are we concerned to be watchful and cautious in such a Circumstance of Danger; and *if we think we stand, to take heed lest we fall.*

And yet it hath come pass in these latter Times, that, instead of guarding themselves
against

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against Temptations of this kind, Men are now employed in providing them ; and that Art is used to hazard the Innocent, and even to seduce them.

Our Forefathers were wiser. They considered that Innocence was of more Consequence than Amusement ; and that it was of little Moment to leave a Fortune to their Posterity, whilst they cherished in them such Follies, as must in a very short time dissipate that Fortune.

The immoderate Love of Pleasure is now become the reigning Vice of the Age. The Consequence of this every one sees, almost every one feels, and yet scarce any one sufficiently regards.

It began with the upper Rank, who, deserting the Employs which had been fashionable in former Times, gave themselves up to Amusements much less creditable. They have very sensibly perceived, I will not say barely the Inconveniencies, but the Distresses from hence arising ; and yet the Fault still continues. It is fit those should bear the Consequences, who first introduced the Cause, and are still bent on supporting it. Would the Mischief stop here, we might hope the Virtue of others would make some amends.

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The Public might suffer in no great Degree, if nothing from hence happened but a Transfer of Property, from the less to the more deserving.

But the Infatuation is amazing. The middle Rank, instead of maintaining their antient Character of Modesty, and Diligence, and Oeconomy, have gone into the very same Fault. They have rivalled their Betters in that, which their Betters themselves are not able to bear; and so have lost all the Advantages they might have promised to themselves, from the Indiscretion and Folly of their Superiors.

Yet this is not all. The very lowest of the People are now become Men of Pleasure. Places of mad Entertainment are prepared for them, at a Rate which may seem at first to agree with their Circumstances;—at a Rate, which, though it may not appear to be insupportable for the present, yet will not fail to ruin them in the End;—not only as they are hereby drained (though in small Proportions) of what ought to be laid up for better Purposes, but likewise as they are cheated of their Time, and indisposed for future Application.

Men are apt to complain of bad Times :

But

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But they themselves make them so. If Extravagance shall raise the Price of Necessaries, and Idleness render Men less capable of purchasing them, — to what is all this to be imputed, but to the Fault of those who have created these Difficulties. If there be any Blame to be laid on the Legislature, it can arise only from this, that such Extravagance, and such Idleness, is not more effectually restrained ; as it would indeed be, if the perverse Temper of the People did not render the very Remedy, which should be provided, impracticable.

I forbear to aggravate this Matter farther : Rather would I chuse to turn the Prospect, and to hope, that after what hath been suffered by monstrous Indiscretion, Men will of themselves return to their Senses, and remove the Cause. If it should prove otherwise, our Case must be indeed desperate : For nothing can save Men, who are obstinately bent and resolved on their own Ruin.

There are several other Reflections, which naturally arise from the History before us : But having already detained you so long, I shall drop them at present, with this only Request, that you would recollect what hath been now said, and improve it to the good Purpose

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Purpose for which it hath been offered. As this is the great End of our Preaching, so is it of your Hearing likewise. Consider this, and the Lord give you a right Judgment in all Things.

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
&c. Amen.

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SERMON IX.

Reflections on the Conduct of HEROD
toward JOHN the Baptist.

PART II.

MATT. xiv. 9.

And the King was sorry: Nevertheless, for the Oath sake, and them that sat with him at Meat, he commanded it to be given her.

I Have opened, in the former Discourse, the Conduct of *Herod*, on a very remarkable Occasion; and noted to you such a Series of Errors, all occasioned originally by the Indulgence of one extravagant Passion, as ought to make us for-ever cautious how we give way to those Desires, we may not be able afterward to restrain.

The Great Man, it seems, had formerly shewn a particular Regard to *John Baptist*:

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And

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And being convinced of his extraordinary Commission, was attentive to his Instructions, and for some time directed his Life by the Precepts he received from him. But it was his Misfortune, that one Passion indulged, left him without the Mastery of himself; and transported him so far, that instead of profiting by the Reproofs of the Baptist, he persecuted the Reprover.

The Case, in short, was this; *Herod* had conceived a violent Affection for his Brother *Philip's* Wife. And when the Baptist (as we might suppose he would) remonstrated against this Passion, *Herod* in Anger laid hold on *John*, and put him in Prison. Perhaps at first he meant no more than to silence the too importunate Admonisher. But he was mistaken if he hoped to stop here. The Event shews it: For what was begun by an unjust Imprisonment, was completed at last by Murder.

The Steps which led on to this most execrable Deed, are recorded in the Text, where we are told, that *when Herod's Birth-day was kept, the Daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod*. I do not find fault with the Celebration of his Birth-day, nor with his doing it with a festival Solemnity.

But

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But surely he must have indulged himself by much too far, and be, as it were, intoxicated upon the Occasion, since he made such a rash Promise, and confirmed it, even by an Oath, to grant her whatsoever she would ask. This he did; and found too late the Difficulty in which he had involved himself: For the Damsel demanded no less a Reward, than the Head of *John Baptist*.

What should have been done on the Occasion, was this; to acknowledge his own Sin and Folly; and to satisfy the Petitioner, that the Request made, was neither fit to be made, nor gratified. But he was in no Condition to reason justly. He was sorry, indeed; but this Sorrow was unavailing, and served only to torment him. His Friends perhaps urged the Performance of his Promise: And so he gratified the Request of his Favourite, at the Expence of his Conscience. The Text says, *the King was sorry: Nevertheless, for his Oath sake, and them that sat with him at Meat, he commanded the Head of John Baptist to be given her.*

Having already offered some Remarks on this historical Passage, I shall now proceed to observe farther, 'The Folly and Sinfulness of rash Promises or Oaths.'

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By *Rashness*, I do here understand, the doing any thing without sufficient Thought and Deliberation ;---the running ourselves hastily into Matters, either without reflecting at all upon them, or without such a Measure of Consideration, as shall enable us to make a prudent Choice.

This, in the general, must appear at the first Sight to be ridiculous ; because, it is a giving up our Reason, and a deserting the immediate Guide of our Actions.

But, I am not to consider the Matter in so extensive a View. I am to speak at present concerning Rashness, as it is applied to Promises or Oaths ; which passing over a certain Right to another, and giving him a Claim to something from us, they ought surely to be well weighed and considered.

Men will see this plainly in the greater Affairs of Life. What Man of common Sense would enter into sudden Engagements, without once thinking at all about them, where his whole Fortune shall lie at Stake, and the least false Step ruin him ? Men are generally cautious enough in such Instances ; and if they are found to err, they meet with that Contempt which they deserve.

But if the main Affairs of Life be once secured,

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cured, Men are apt to give themselves greater Licence in other Particulars : They imagine lesser Matters are not worth considering ; as though Prudence had no Room to shew itself here, and Men might, in things of inferior Moment, be as ridiculous as they please.

And so indeed we might allow them to be, if they would not hereby run themselves into serious Difficulties ; if they would take care, that others might receive no Prejudice from their Follies ; and that they themselves might not unawares be drawn into Sin.

Yet this doth, and must prove the Case, where Men do not sufficiently consider, what Promises they make. Perhaps, the Thing may be impossible, or sinful. Perhaps, tho' possible, it may yet be attended with such Inconveniences, as shall strongly tempt a Man to violate his Promise : Or, if he should notwithstanding keep it, he may prove injurious to his Family and Dependents.

In all these Cases, the rash Engagement is not only absurd, but wicked. It is absurd, because it is not guided by that Reason, which ought to influence it ; And it is sinful, because, it either directly involves him in Sin, or strongly tempts him to it.

See the thing more clearly in the Conduct

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of *Herod*. This rash Person, upon a very slight Occasion, made a Promise to the Daughter of *Herodias*, that *he would give her whatever she would ask*. He never once considered, that Demands might be made, which were improper to be granted. Had he been exposed to this Inconvenience only, the Absurdity of his Rashness must be apparent. But when we consider withal, that Occasion was hereby given to the making Demands unlawful,—when we consider what was in fact the Consequence, *Give me the Head of John Baptist in a Charger*;---when, I say, we, consider this, we cannot acquit *Herod* of great Sinfulness, as well as extreme Folly.

But the Matter was still farther aggravated, by his confirming so extravagant a Promise with the Solemnity of an Oath; which, being a serious and religious Rite, ought not to be used on any slight or common Occasion.

An Oath is an Invocation of God, as a Witness to the Truth of what we affirm, or to the Sincerity of what we promise. This therefore must, from the very Nature of it, require great Seriousness and Preparation of Mind. Oaths in common Conversation, even though the Things confirmed by them be true, are

con-

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condemned in Holy Scripture ; our Saviour having required, that the utmost we should do in ordinary Discourse, is only to use repeated Affirmations or Denials. But they are still more criminal, where the Matter confirmed by them is uncertain,—or the Thing promised, what we may not perhaps be able to perform. It is to affront God in a very high Degree, to make our Appeal to him on *any*, or *no* Occasion ; and much more so, to call on him as a Witness, as well to our Iniquities as our Follies.

There are Three Things especially necessary, in order to make Oaths themselves lawful ; *viz.* That the Matter of them be in itself lawful and weighty ;—that it be truly and thoroughly considered by us ;—and that the Circumstances attending the Oaths we make, be such as are expressive of the Reverence which we owe to God. But, in the present Case of rash Swearing, there may be, and often is, a Defect in every one of these Particulars. The Thing itself, about which these Oaths are made, is often of no Consequence at all ; or if it be, yet still it is merely accidental, with regard to him who makes them. He is too impatient of Thought, to bestow any Reflection upon it : And there-

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fore it is to him all one, whether the thing engaged for be great or small;—possible or impossible;—lawful or criminal.

The highest Aggravation of the Case is this; when the thing confirmed by this sacred Engagement, is in itself sinful; and especially if it imply some extraordinary Degrees of Guilt. It is criminal to meditate what is ill, even though there be no formed Resolution of doing it. It is much more so to resolve upon it, though happy Accidents shall prevent the Execution of such Resolves: To enter into Engagements with others, for this Purpose, carries the Matter still farther: But to confirm such Engagements by Oaths, and to invoke the Vengeance of the All-just Being, for not doing what this very Being abhors, is a Circumstance so very shocking in itself, that it needs no Word to aggravate it,

This proved the Case of *Herod*. He had sworn to grant *whatever the Daughter of Herodias would ask of him*. He had not considered, that an Engagement made in such general Terms, might lead him into something extremely criminal. But when she demanded the Baptist's Head, he began to see his Error. He was then sorry, when it was too late to be so. And he knew not how to behave

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behave on an Occasion, when he must either falsify his Oath, or become the Murderer of the Baptist.

Another Reflection which I shall offer on the History before us, relates to *Herod's* Behaviour in this Conjunction. The Consequence was, that, to save his Oath, he destroyed the Prophet; and so heightened the Sin of his Rashness, by the Commission of a Murder. This was a very wrong Decision upon the Point. Instead of fulfilling his Promise, he ought to have retracted it: He ought to have satisfied the Daughter of *Herodias*, if possible, that the Demand she made, was neither fit to be made, or to be gratified. And if he could not succeed here, he ought to have shewn so much Resolution, as to break his Word, and have endeavoured to fulfil his Engagement in some other more justifiable Way.

I shall take Occasion from hence, to offer somewhat on this Case of Conscience; *viz.* How far the Obligation of rash Promises or Oaths, doth in several Cases reach; and shew withal, on what Foot the Conduct of *Herod* ought to be condemned by us.

I have observed under the former Reflection, that rash Promises or Oaths, are not
only

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only absurd, but sinful. And yet we dare not affirm, that merely on this account they cease to oblige. What was faulty in the Original, may be binding in its Consequences. And accordingly there is a Maxim, which will hold in this Case, as well as some others, “That those Things which, upon account of some Irregularity, ought not to have been done at first, are yet valid and binding when done.” There are therefore Instances, in which the Rashness of our Engagements cannot excuse us from performing them; and where, if some Difficulties and Inconveniencies should arise, we must bear them, as the Punishments of not having considered better. It is the Character of an honest Man given us by the Psalmist, that he *sweareth to his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own Hindrance.* [Psf. xv. ver. 5.]

In Matters of private Discretion or Advantage, it concerns us to look well to Things in the Beginning. But if we fail here, and bind ourselves down to that, which may be prejudicial in its Consequence, we must not think of retreating when it is too late. The Promise, and perhaps the Oath of God is upon us; and we must perform it to the full.

In

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In all Cases of this Nature, we pass over some Right or other from ourselves; and therefore, must be bound so far as we are capable of making that Right away. If then what we either promise simply, or else engage by Oath, be a thing which we might lawfully have done, without any Engagement of that kind, it is certain and evident we are bound to perform it: For there can be no such thing as Obligation at all, if Promises and Oaths do not bind us to that, which might lawfully have been done by us, without any Engagements whatsoever. Thus far we do affirm, that those very Oaths, which were perhaps rash and criminal in the making, may yet bind and tie us down to the Performance.

Yet there are other Cases, in which even Oaths themselves cannot oblige; in which we either *cannot*, or *must not* act: And consequently where we have nothing else to do, but to repent of those Engagements, we are unable to, or durst not, answer. These are reducible to Two Heads;

- I. Where the Thing engaged for is impossible. And,
- II. Where it is in itself, or its Circumstances, unlawful.

I shall

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I shall say very little of those Oaths, which regard things impossible. The Obligation of such is affirmed by no one ; For, we cannot assign a better Reason for the Non-performance of any thing, than this, that it is absolutely beyond our Power.

But notwithstanding, though there be no Obligation to Performance, yet there is to Repentance : And it would perhaps be proper, to attempt some Amends in the Ways we are able, for not keeping those Engagements, of the keeping which we are incapable. This at least deserves to be considered ; and as such I leave it with you.

But the most considerable Case, and that which comes home to the Purpose of *Herod*, relates to Oaths, where the Matter of them is unlawful. He had virtually sworn to behead *John the Baptist*, by engaging to grant whatsoever should be demanded of him. But then he should have considered, the Thing itself was sinful ; the Oath unlawful as to the Matter, and therefore without any Effect or Obligation as to the Consequence.

This Determination shall be supported, by observing, that no one can give another a Right to claim from him, what he had no Right to give. No one can bind himself to
do,

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do, what he had no original Authority to do. Every binding Promise or Oath, must suppose the Man capable of being bound, who makes it ; and this must farther suppose, that he might, or had Authority to, perform what he pretends to oblige himself to. Otherwise, this Absurdity or Contradiction will arise; *viz.* That, at the very same time, a Man may be under contradictory Obligations ; an original Obligation to forbear an Action, in Obedience to God's Will, and a contrary Obligation to perform the Action, in consequence of his own Promise or Oath.

If this Absurdity be not sufficiently apparent, I will add, that these two opposite Obligations must mutually destroy one another, as all things equal and contrary must necessarily do : That in such a Case as this, a Man is really under no Obligation at all to act either way, but entirely and absolutely at his Liberty. And of consequence, even upon this Foot of arguing, no Obligation can possibly arise from Promises or Oaths, where the Subject-matter of them is unlawful.

But perhaps it may be said, that the Obligation arising from the Promise or Oath removes all former Obligation ;---that the Man is from thenceforward bound to fulfil his

new

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new Engagements : And therefore, that the above-mentioned Difficulty is avoided by maintaining, that two opposite Obligations do not subsist together, the latter still destroying the former, to which it succeeds.

This Evasion must appear to be indefensible, from what hath been observed already. For, if we were originally bound to obey the Will of God, we could have no Right or Authority to disobey him in the least : And of consequence, we could not lay ourselves under any kind of Obligation to disobey him. And besides, To whom can we be under the Obligation to disobey God? Not to God himself; for it is Nonsense to suppose, that God should oblige us to disobey himself :—And not to Man ; because a lower Obligation cannot possibly make void a greater.

I shall add one Consideration farther to this Purpose : If it be still affirmed, that the latter Obligation doth in this Case destroy the former, then we shall run ourselves into this Absurdity, *viz.* That we have it in our Power at any time to void all kind of Obligation. A contrary Promise or Oath, it seems, will do the Business. At this rate, what single Point, either in Religion or Morality, can be sufficiently bound upon us? Nay, upon the same Principle

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Principle by which it should be maintained, that Oaths are obligatory, where the Matter of them is unlawful, we may clearly prove, that they cannot at all oblige. I suppose it cannot be questioned, whether one Oath doth not as much oblige as another ; and whether, if one former Obligation may be destroyed by a succeeding, this will not as well hold concerning any other supposeable Obligation. A contrary Promise or Oath, therefore, must remove and make void the preceding. A Man must, on this Foot, have it in his Power to void all Engagements when he pleases. And if this be once admitted, it will be difficult to shew, how a Man is strictly obliged to any thing. For I believe it will readily be allowed me, that those Obligations are of no manner of Moment, which a Man may keep or void, as most suits a present Humour or Interest.

Upon this account, *viz.* That we have no Right or Authority to do an ill Thing ; and, consequently, cannot by any Act of ours bind ourselves to do it ;—that every Act of that kind, must be null and void from the Beginning ; upon this account, I say, we condemn the Proceedings of *Herod* ; who, *for his Oath sake* (which he ought rather to have

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retracted, than fulfilled) *beheaded John in the Prison.*

But, Cases which come up to this Instance of *Herod*, are not ordinary. Scarce any pretend to justify a Murder, by alledging an Oath for committing it; or think that, in such a shocking Instance as this, the Plea would be available. Yet they sometimes act by the same Principle in other Instances. They do ill, because they have promised, or perhaps sworn to do it; as though a Plea, which they themselves would condemn in one Instance, ought not to be as much censured in another.

I will put a Case which happens too often, and apply to it what I have hitherto remarked. This will make my Reflections more useful, when it is seen, they do not refer only to imaginary Cases, but are equally applicable to Matters of certain and known Fact.

A Child perhaps proves obstinate, as well as disobedient to a Parent, in some concerning Article. He cannot be influenced either by Persuasion or Authority. He still goes on, till at length he is incapable of retreating. It is not to be wondered if such a Conduct should be resented. Something this way may be proper: But the Misfortune is, that

Matters

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Matters are apt to be carried too far. The Man, in a Passion, disinherits his Child ; resolves never more to bear the least favourable Respect towards him ;—confirms these Resolutions by Oaths and Imprecations ; and *will leave no Room for the Child's Repentance, even though he should seek it carefully with Tears.* The Question arising upon the Case is this ; “ Is the Parent bound by any Oaths of this kind, however made, or frequently repeated, entirely to desert his Child ? ”

By no means. The Oath was rash, and the Matter of it unlawful ; and therefore, agreeably to the Principles before laid down, it can bind not to Performance, but Repentance.

But it will be said perhaps, May not a Man dispose of his own Fortune in what manner he pleases, and take that Liberty which the very Laws of his Country allow him ?—I think not, in all Cases. If a Man were to be virtuous and honest, no farther than he might otherwise be prosecuted in a Civil Court, he might be extremely wicked. Much is left to the Determination of Conscience ; and it concerns Men to decide faithfully.

To come more home to the Point : There is a natural Obligation, from which no Man can free himself, to take some Care of his

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Children. He, saith *St. Paul*, *that careth not for his own, especially those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel* [1 Tim. v. ver. 8.] Ill Conduct, and Disobedience may forfeit Favours, and Things which are the Encouragements of Obedience: But Matters of Right,—such as is a Subsistence (if the Parent is capable of affording it), cannot be forfeited. To afford this, he was bound originally as a Parent. And therefore no rash, or irregular Act of his, can afterward disappoint the Obligation to Performance.

But, what then ! Are Children to be all placed on an equal Foot ; and is no Distinction to be made, either to encourage the good, or to reprove the wicked ?—This we dare not say. Room is here left for the Exercise of Prudence, and to carry on domestic Affairs wisely.

Upon the Case, I think, thus much may be affirmed safely ;

1. That whatever the Conduct of a Child may be, yet he still retains a Right to common and ordinary Subsistence. This the Parent is naturally bound to afford him, if he can ; and no Engagements to the contrary can dispense with him.

2. It

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3. It may be affirmed, Secondly, that as a Child, who hath once proved disobedient, though in an important Article, may afterwards repent, so upon his Repentance, the Parent is bound to pardon him. This is a Principle as well of natural as revealed Religion. And if he is bound to pardon, he must, of consequence, be obliged to all the proper Marks and Tokens of Pardon. An Oath therefore never to forgive, must be in itself unlawful : And as he had no Right to make it, he can have no Right to keep it. — I know there are several other Particulars relating to this Case, which I have not Time to enter into at present. Thus much may be of some Use : And may God direct you, if Occasion should require, in the Application !

I shall add one Reflection farther ; and that relates to the Consequence of *Herod's* Behaviour, on the unhappy Occasion I have been treating of. Probably, when the cruel Murder of *John Baptist* was committed, *Herod* did, as all other grievous Sinners are wont to do, endeavour to quiet his Mind by every Artifice, which his own Imagination could present, or his Friends suggest to him. And it is as probable, that Artifices of this kind might succeed for a Time, and the Sin-

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ner go on as contentedly, as though he had done nothing amiss. But such sort of Serenity cannot last always. Occasions will offer of awakening the Mind ;---of putting it upon recollecting what is past,---of feeling its own Guilt ;---and of foreseeing the dreadful Punishment which must follow. See this exemplified in the Case of *Herod*. For we are told in the former Verses of this Chapter, *that when Herod heard of the Fame of Jesus, he said It is John Baptist ; he is risen from the Dead ; and therefore wonderful Works do shew forth themselves in him* [Ver. 1, 2.]

But how came he to think, that *Jesus* must be *John Baptist* ? How came he to think, that the Miracles wrought by *Jesus* were an Argument to this Purpose ?---Did the Baptist work Miracles whilst alive ? Was it any Part of his Character to do so ?---How, again, came he to think of a Resurrection of the Baptist,---when the very Principles which *Herod* embraced, were inconsistent with such a Doctrine ? For, *Herod*, it seems, was a *Sadducee* ; and the *Sadducees* affirm, that there is neither Angel nor Spirit ; and, consequently, no Resurrection to be expected. Yet, contrary to these Presumptions (which one might think must have taken hold of him) immediately

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mediately upon hearing the Fame of *Jesus*, he said, *It is John Baptist; he is risen from the Dead.*

Jesus had appeared with a singular Profession and Practice of Piety; and taught with an Authority which belonged to no other Person: For, he supported this Authority by many wonderful Works, above the Power of any created visible Agent to produce. This brought to his Mind the inhuman Treatment which he had given to the Baptist; a Prophet likewise, and whom he himself had acknowledged to be so.

In that Hurry of Thought, which such a Recollection must produce, he fancied this could be none other than the Baptist himself, --come again to take Vengeance on him, and to re-establish his violated Character at *Herod's* Expence. If this were the Case (as we may fairly presume it was) how must the Terrors of this single Moment overbalance all his past sinful Pleasures? — How must *the Arrows of the Almighty* pierce him, and his Hand press him sore?

How long these Terrors might continue, is not said. He found means perhaps of quieting his Mind again, as he had done once before. Company, and Conversation, and

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the idle Rallying of his Sadducizing Friends, might relieve him for the present, and drive off such melancholy Thoughts. But after the utmost he could do, it must have been impossible for him to effect this entirely. No doubt he felt many Returns of these terrible Apprehensions. And his last, most exemplary Death, when (in the Scripture Language, *Acts xii. 23.*) *He was smitten of an Angel*, is a most affecting Proof, that Vengeance must come at last; against which no Splendour of Appearance,—no Height of Power,—no Flatteries of the Multitude, are able to protect him. The sacred Writings assure us, that *the Angel of the Lord smote him :—and he was eaten up of Worms, and gave up the Ghost.* [*Acts xii. 23.*]

This is by no means a singular Case; for it generally happens on similar Occasions. To this Purpose God hath implanted in us, what is, in some Sense, his Vicegerent, Conscience; I mean an inward Power of discerning what is notoriously wrong;—of recollecting our past bad Actions;—of censuring and condemning ourselves for them;—of foreseeing the dreadful Consequences which must attend them;—and of anticipating, in a certain Degree, the very Punishments we are
to

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to receive hereafter. Under such a Constitution as this, can a grievous Sinner be secure of one Moment's Ease ? Can he run from himself ? If he shall attempt to do so, Self will be ever present notwithstanding ? Will he endeavour to bribe his Conscience ? He may attempt this likewise, by cherishing such Principles as are most consistent with a vicious Course. But the Building he thus strives to raise, must sink through its own Weakness, though no Diseases of the Body, and no Accidents of Life, shall contribute to undermine it. Will he endeavour to relieve his miserable Mind by Diversion and Amusement ? Or by the more boisterous Noise of intemperate Company ? What is this, but a momentary Relief at best ? It can last no longer, than till he sleeps himself into his Senses again. Then the same Terrors return,—to be removed only by the same Methods,—and then they will return again. So that the whole of his remaining Life must, under such Circumstances as these, be divided between Misery and Madness.

After all, I do not say, that this is the Portion of every Sinner. For, there are Degrees of Sin no doubt ; and the more exemplary Punishment can be expected only to follow

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follow the more grievous and notorious Offenders. Nor will I undertake to maintain, that every grievous Sinner is affected in this manner. This doth not always appear: Though, if we were more intimately acquainted with what passes secretly in the Minds of such Men, we might discover much more of it than we do at present. It is sufficient if this frequently happens. And where it may prove otherwise, let us not think the Sinner's Case is upon the whole the better. There is only an heavier Wrath treasuring up against him. His own Blindness, and not discerning the Consequences of Things, cannot prevent them. We should therefore consider, that however there may be some Delay of Punishment, yet it is not the less certain: And those Miseries will come soon enough, which are to endure for-ever.

I have now done with the several Reflections, which I designed to offer on the History before us. And shall only add, that in this way of considering Matters, it will appear what Use may be made, as well of the worst as of the best Examples. We have seen the Folly and Wickedness of *Herod*; and traced him on through the several Steps, whereby he rose from one Sin to another. Seeing
his

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his Errors, we should learn to avoid them. This is the only way, either to obtain the Happiness which he lost, or to avoid that Misery which he incurred.

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
&c. Amen.

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S E R M O N X.

PROPHECIES and MIRACLES sufficient
Proofs of a Divine Commission.

JOHN XX. 31.

*But these are written that ye might believe, that
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

THE Words produced refer us back to those great Incidents in the Life of Christ, which are mentioned in the foregoing Parts of this Gospel: And whilst they represent our Apostle's Intention in recording them, they suggest to us this farther Point, that the Matters so recorded, are sufficient for the Attainment of this End.

The End itself is expressly mentioned in the Text; viz. the Belief of Christ's Divine
Authority:

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Authority : And the Incidents applied to this Purpose, are the several Characters in our Blessed Lord's Person and Conduct, by which ancient Prophecies were accomplished ;— together with those various Instances of super-natural Power, which he manifested. And so the Words before us lead me directly to this Point ; namely, the Sufficiency of the Argument from PROPHECIES and MIRACLES in favour of a Divine Commission.

In the Prosecution of this Subject, I shall,

- I. Offer such Reflections on Prophecies and Miracles, as may be of some Use to clear the Point now before us.
- II. I shall state and limit the Doctrine I maintain ; and shew how far, and under what Circumstances, the Argument drawn from Prophecies and Miracles in Proof of a Revelation is sufficient. After this, I shall;
- III. Evince the Strength of that Argument, by shewing wherein the real Force of it doth consist.

First then, I am to make such Reflections on Prophecies and Miracles, as may be of some Use in clearing the Point before us.

By

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By *Prophecy* I would be understood to mean, the Prediction of some future Event incapable of being foreknown by Man; and by a *Miracle*, the Production of some Effect, in itself, or its Circumstances, above the Power of any visible Means or Agent. These are not offered as complete Definitions of PROPHECY or MIRACLE, but only as Descriptions sufficient for my present Purpose.

Now the First Observation I would make on their respective Natures, is this; the one implies a Disproportion between the Thing foreknown, and the greatest human Fore-sight; the other implies a like Disproportion between the Thing done, and the greatest human or visible Power. On this Account each must refer us to some superior Being as their Author;---to some Being whose Knowledge, or whose Power, is more than Human.

In this respect Prophecies and Miracles do so nearly agree, that they may be considered, in some Sense, as of the same kind. To say the Truth, in certain Cases, what are called *Miracles* may approach very nearly to *Prophecies*; in those, I mean, where the Miracle consists in a Disproportion between the Thing discovered, and any human Power of
Know-

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Knowlege. Thus, when Christ declared the secret Thoughts of his Disciples, He performed a most signal Miracle, without the Exertion of any active Power at all. The only Difference between this Instance and Prophecy, will be, the one consisted in the knowing something actually in Being, beyond all human Knowlege; the other, in foreknowing something future, which was beyond mere human Foresight. But, excepting this, or some other like Instances, though it may be thought that every Prophecy hath, in some Sense, the Nature of Miracle, yet Miracle hath not in it the Nature of Prophecy.

In relation to Prophecies, it should be observed, that these may be thought to have a different Influence upon Two different Suppositions; I mean, upon Supposition, either,

1. That the World is entirely material; or,
2. That it consists of different Beings; some of which are *material* and passive, others are *spiritual* and active.

If the World be supposed to be entirely material, the Affair of Prophecy may seem, at first Sight, capable of being accounted for in a philosophical Way: For, upon this Foot, what-

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whatever Event happens, was settled and determined from the Beginning,---depended on a fixed Chain of Causes and Effects; and could not be otherwise, in such a Constitution of Things. The World, in this Way of Consideration, is a large Machine, whose Parts (however various) have a determined Relation to each other: And whilst nothing interposes to alter the Machine itself, or to interrupt its Operations, all its Effects must be such as the Machine was at first suited to produce. Of consequence, any Being acquainted with this Frame, may be supposed capable of calculating its Effects with Certainty.

However, it ought to be considered, that as mere Matter is purely passive, so whatever Effects are, in common Language, produced by Matter, must follow from the Impressions made on it by some intelligent Agent. To know, therefore, what these Effects will be, these Impressions themselves must be first known. Nor will this be, of itself, sufficient: For the same Being who framed this Machine, and gave it the first Impulse, hath all its Operations at Command; may interpose when he pleases; may forward, or retard, or alter its Motions: And, consequently, no

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Being can know what will in fact be produced, without knowing withal when, and how far, the First intelligent Mover will act; which, depending on absolute Will, cannot, I conceive, be known but by the First Mover himself.

The Second Supposition makes the World consist of different Beings, some of which are *material* and passive, and others are *spiritual* and active: In which Supposition this farther must be noted, that the *spiritual* Parts may influence and operate upon the material. Under this State of the Thing the Affair of Prophecy will be still more wonderful. To a Being indeed of infinite Knowledge (such as God is) all things are open: But the most sagacious Being, if his Understanding be short of Infinite, doth not seem, on the present Foot, capable of foreseeing Events future.

It must be allowed, that some general Rules may be so established, that he who knows them may from thence calculate general Events with tolerable Exactness. But the Matters now in View are of a different Kind. They are such as happen to particular Nations, or to particular Men. These depend upon numberless Actions of a Variety

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of voluntary Agents; and therefore cannot be foreseen by any Skill in the mere Mechanism of the World.

The greatest Events of this kind often turn on the sudden Interposition of One single voluntary Agent; insomuch that he who knows the whole Scheme projected, the Persons engaged, and all their several Views, cannot be secure of the Event; because he cannot tell, how far a sudden Caprice may give a new Turn to the Affair.

But, if it be so difficult, I may say impossible, for a finite Being to come at absolute Certainty about a Matter just on the Point of Execution, what shall we say of those Events which are distant, and governed by Ten thousand irregular Determinations of voluntary and irregular Agents? There is a great Difference between knowing the present Thoughts of Men, as yet undiscovered by them, and foreknowing their future Thoughts and Determinations. Even the former is probably the Prerogative of God himself, who is intimately present with his Creatures, and *in whom they live, and move, and have their Being*. But however this be, I think I may venture to affirm confidently, that the Foreknowledge of the future Determinations

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minations of voluntary Agents cannot belong to any created Being whatsoever, in virtue of any inherent Excellency.

We may farther observe, in relation to Prophecies, that, as these respect Things not yet in Being, so the Effect of them is future, and perhaps at a long Distance from the Time in which they were first uttered. In this they differ from what are commonly called Miracles; which being Operations present, the Effect of these is immediate.

In consequence of what is here remarked, we may assign to them Ends and Uses in some respects different; Miracles being chiefly necessary to give present Credit to 'a Teacher, whilst Prophecies may, in most Cases, be rather serviceable for the Conviction of future Ages. Thus in reference to our Blessed Lord, whose Divine Commission was confirmed as well by the Prophecies accomplished in him, as by the Miracles wrought by him: Of the former kind were several delivered by various Prophets from the earliest Times downward; and the Accomplishment of them was a Mark whereby this extraordinary Teacher might be known. The Effect of these was future, — at a vast Distance from the Times in which they were
first

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first uttered ; and they served rather to gain Credit to the Person they pointed at, than to the Prophets who delivered them.

To say the Truth, the Credit of the Predicters was to be established in some other Way ;--in most Cases, probably, by Miracles. This being once settled, their Prophecies were received and preserved, not in virtue of any Evidence as yet arising from themselves, but on account of the established Credit of the Prophets who delivered them ; till at length, when they came to be fulfilled, they not only served their own main original Purpose of pointing out the *Messias*, but reflected back Honour, and gained farther Reputation to the Predicters themselves.

Beyond this, it may be noted, that, in some Cases, the Prophecies delivered are not intended to mark out some extraordinary Person to appear hereafter, but to serve as a sort of accessory Evidence of the Predicters Authority in future Times. Such were several delivered by our Blessed Lord himself, and by his Apostles afterwards. Some of these have been accomplished already ; and others, we trust, will, in their proper Times, receive a just Accomplishment ; which (whenever it shall happen) will supply the

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Defects supposed to arise from traditionary Evidence,---and be a sort of growing Proof, perhaps incapable of being misunderstood or resisted.

From what hath been here remarked concerning the future Effect and Influence of Prophecies, a rational Account may be given why they are often obscure. In some Cases, possibly, the Person, by whom these Prophecies have been delivered, might not thoroughly comprehend their Intention; and, in most Cases, those to whom they were at first given, might have a very imperfect Notion of their Meaning. These seemed to have been little farther concerned than to preserve and deliver down these Prophecies, infinitely valuable to others, though of less Moment to themselves. But, as they were intended principally for the Use of future Times, it is enough if their Meaning be unfolded in future Times; enough, if the Events accomplished shall at once explain and verify the Predictions.

I shall offer One Remark on the Nature of Miracles, of which a Use may be made hereafter: A MIRACLE (as before described) is the Production of some Effect; in itself, or its Circumstances, above the Power of any
visible

visible Means or Agent. Upon this a Difficulty may arise what are properly Miracles; because we know not how far the Power of visible Agents may extend, or what may be the Influence of those Means they may possibly use. But, though a Difficulty should be supposed capable of arising in certain Cases, yet this will not prejudice the Cause I am contending for. To this Purpose let it be observed,

1. Though Cases should happen, in which it may be difficult to distinguish between real Miracles and natural Effects, yet it will not follow from hence, that there can be no Miracles properly so called. The very Difficulty of distinguishing, in certain Cases, supposes that there ARE OR MAY be real Miracles which occasion the Difficulty. Let it be observed,

2dly. That, in other Cases, the Reality of Miracles may be so apparent as to prevent all Difficulty whatsoever. This is sufficient for our Purpose; because, in all Instances of real Difficulty, we may safely give up the Point, and rest our Cause on those Effects which are clearly supernatural. The Miracles I am concerned about, are Divine Attestations of a Divine Commission; concerning which Commission we might safely doubt,

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unless some such Credential be produced. But, in all Reason, the Argument alleged to prove a Point must be clearer than the Point intended to be proved. From whence we may safely conclude, that God will not work Miracles, nor permit them to be wrought, under such Circumstances as shall render their Reality in the least doubtful; since that would disappoint the very Effect they were intended to produce.

I shall now proceed to,

II. My Second general Head; *viz.* To state and limit the Doctrine I would establish.

And here Two Questions will arise;

1. What the Point is, which Prophecies and Miracles are designed to prove? And,
2. How far, and under what Circumstances, we do assert, that they are a sufficient Argument to prove it?

The former Question is the more needful to be taken notice of, because those who have treated on this Subject, have not always expressed themselves with sufficient Caution: Some have alleged them as the Proofs of a Divine Commission; whilst others have expressed themselves in such a Manner, as though they reckoned them rather the Evidences of the Doctrines taught, than of an Authority

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Authority to teach them. There is certainly a Difference between these Two Representations of the Matter; and a Difference likewise, not founded on a mere Nicety, which a wise Man might judge proper to overlook, but fruitful of very important Consequences: For the one of these Schemes will guard against Objections,---whilst the other lays us open to such Difficulties, as we may not be able perfectly to master.

We do maintain, therefore, that both Prophecies and Miracles (so far as either are concerned here) are properly, and in their immediate View, the Proofs of a Divine Commission; though remotely, and in their Consequences, they are Evidences likewise of those Points which the commissioned Teacher dictates.

In relation to Prophecies the Point is clear, These (as I have noted before) have a future Effect, not to be obtained till their Accomplishment; and, when accomplished, they do either point out to us some extraordinary Teacher appointed by God, and are one Evidence of his Commission; or else, refer us back to that Person, who first uttered the Prophecies; and then they may be a Confirmation of his Divine Commission likewise.

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We may illustrate both these in the Instance of our Blessed Lord. The numerous Prophecies in the Old Testament fulfilled in him, proved him to be that Prophet who should come into the World; and those Predictions which were delivered by himself, and accomplished in After-times, were to future Ages a farther Confirmation of his Authority.

As to Miracles, they have the same main View. These likewise should be considered as Proofs not directly of Doctrines, but of the Divine Authority of their Teachers. Agreeably to this, our Blessed Lord declares, *The Works which the Father hath given me to do, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me* [John v. 36.] Here, as well as in many other Places, Miracles are alleged in Proof of our Blessed Lord's Commission.

Having thus shewn what the Point is which Prophecies and Miracles are designed to prove, I must now, in order to the full stating my Doctrine, enquire,

2. How far, and under what Circumstances, they are a sufficient Argument to prove it?

We are far from maintaining, that either
Prophecies

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Prophecies or Miracles are, in all Cases, Evidences sufficient of a Divine Commission. Other things must be taken into the Account, either as Parts of the Proof itself,---or as Conditions, at least, without which no Proof of this kind can be available.

Now the First Condition is this: That the Doctrine taught under the Claim of a Divine Commission must be, in its own Nature, capable of Proof; that is, must be consistent not only with itself, but with every other certain Truth; and be such, likewise, as, on other Accounts, is not unworthy of a Divine Manifestation.

Whosoever attempts to prove a Point, must suppose the Truth of the Thing intended to be proved; because Proof doth not create the Truth, but manifest it. In all Arguments, therefore, by us alleged, we must presume there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing which makes it impossible to be true: But there can be no stronger Argument of Falseness than this, that the Point proposed is inconsistent with, and destroys itself. It follows, that where-ever such an Inconsistency is evident, we may reject the Point immediately; for it is not worth while to consider Arguments in favour of a Matter incapable

incapable of being supported by any Argument.

Again ; Whatsoever is true, must be consistent with every other Truth ; for no Truths can possibly destroy each other. If, therefore, the Matter proposed be clearly inconsistent with any obvious and certain Truth, it is so far incapable of being proved ; and, consequently, no Evidence in Support of it can be esteemed sufficient.

But then it should be observed, in regard to both these Instances, that a Difference must be made between those Matters whose Falseness is attempted to be shewn by an immediate Comparison of Ideas, and those others in which there is required a long Train of intermediate Ideas. In the former Case, the Evidence arising will be clear and full ; in the latter, it *may* be indistinct and defective. We do not affirm, there can be no sufficient Evidence from a long Train of Reasoning. If rightly pursued, it *may* be as certain as Self-evidence itself : But, as few are capable of conducting an Argument of this kind, a modest Person would distrust his Deductions ; and not allow to them the same Weight as he would to the First Principles of Science.

To proceed : The Points offered must likewise

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wife be such as are worthy of a Divine Manifestation. They must not only be consistent with the moral Attributes of God (such are his Justice, Goodness, and Righteousness), but likewise with that consummate Wisdom, which is essential to the Divine Nature. What proceeds from God must have in it the proper Marks and Characters of Divinity; because, such as God is, such in proportion are all his Works.

And yet even this must be understood in a proper Sense, and with due Restrictions. As we know not the Whole of Things, so we may not be able distinctly to account for each Particular; and therefore there may be a great Fitness in the Whole, though certain Parts should, at first Sight, seem liable to great Objections. If the Main discovers to us Righteousness, and Goodness, and Wisdom, from this apparent Excellency of the greater Part, we may infer a like Excellency in the rest; in regard to which a *modest* Man (if doubting) would suspect his own Apprehension of Things; and chuse rather to blame his own hasty Judgment, than reject what, on many accounts, comes strongly recommended to him.

And as it is necessary, in order to give
Force

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Force to the Argument I am upon, that the Points taught under the Claim of a Divine Commission be duly qualified, so is it likewise, that the Prophecies or Miracles themselves be duly and properly applied: For Mistakes may be made here; and Unbelievers will make Advantage of such Errors.

It should therefore be observed, in reference both to Prophecies and Miracles, that they can be Evidence of a Divine Commission no farther than they are alleged as Evidence; — no farther than such a Commission is claimed under them, and confirmed by them.

That I may be understood more clearly, I shall put the Case of Prophecies accomplished. In all Instances these are sufficient to prove an extraordinary Revelation, at least to the Person who first delivers the Prophecy; because they are disproportioned to the greatest human Knowledge: And therefore, the Prophecies of *Balaam*, concerning the future State of the *Jews*, are an incontestible Argument of this Point. But, as *Balaam* never alleged these in Proof of his being commissioned by God to deliver any new Doctrine in his Name, so it would be a wrong Use to apply them for that Purpose; and

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and any Conclusions of such a Nature must be weak and frivolous. So again, *Cyrus* is by *Isaiab* very particularly described, and even named. Yet, as the Predictions concerning him (however punctually fulfilled afterward) were not delivered as the Marks of a divinely commissioned Teacher, and as this great Man never claimed such a Commission, so they cannot, according to common Sense, be esteemed a Proof of it. Prophecies, not declared as Signs, were never intended by God to be so; and nothing should be alleged for Ends which it was never designed to answer.

With regard to Miracles, and the Application of them to our present Purpose, a Distinction should be made between Miracles of *natural* Providence, and those of *moral* or *religious* Providence. The former are those, which, affecting the outward Order and Condition of the World, may correct Irregularities, and serve to restore the original Constitution; or they may promote the particular Advantages of Persons designed for some extraordinary Service; but, being intended for nothing farther, can be of no Use in the present Argument. Miracles of *religious* Providence (pardon these new Terms) are those
which

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which are not only intended for the Use of the *natural* World, but designed likewise to give Credit to a Teacher. In Scripture they are called *Signs*, as being some of the great Marks whereby a Prophet, or Divine Instructor, may be known: But, in order to obtain this Effect, the Person who works them, or on whose Account they are wrought, must assume the Character of a Prophet, and produce them as Evidences of his Commission: Otherwise, even real Miracles, though they may astonish the Spectator, and argue some superior Power, yet, not being alleged for any particular Purpose, will be Arguments only of Power; and, being wrought as *Signs* of nothing, can prove nothing by them signified.

I must not dismiss this Head, without noting One Condition farther in relation to Miracles; and that concerns certain Circumstances which may attend the working of them. The Miracles therefore alleged in support of a Divine Authority, must be such as are either *unopposed* by other Miracles wrought for an opposite Purpose, or, if *opposed*, they must carry with them a Manifestation of some superior and uncontrollable Power. If they are absolutely unopposed, then,

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then, whilst wrought agreeably to the Conditions already insisted on, there can be no appearing Ground for rejecting them; and the Force of the Argument from thence deduced, shall be established under my next Head: But if, being opposed, they manifest a Power superior to that which opposes them; such a Superiority of Power will argue a Superiority of Right; and this likewise shall be shewn hereafter. On the other hand, if Two Persons, opposing each other's Claim of Divine Authority, should both work Miracles, equal in Number, and manifesting equal Power; — and if no other Circumstances should arise to the particular Favour or Disadvantage of either, here would be a real Difficulty, and a serious Man would not know how to judge. But this is an imaginary Case; and which, as it hath never yet happened, so we may conclude, from many Considerations, it never will. There will be always some proper Marks whereby to distinguish the Claims of each Pretender; and the Nature either of their Doctrines, or of their Works, will shew plainly, *whether they come from God, or whether they speak of themselves.*

III. I am now, under my Third general
 VOL. I. U Head,

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Head, to shew the Force of the Argument, drawn from Prophecies and Miracles, in favour of a Divine Commission.

And here we have one Advantage, which ought not to be lightly given up; I mean, the common Sense of Mankind on our Side. Those who have laid claim to a Divine Commission, in virtue of real Prophecies or Miracles, rightly circumstanced, have been usually thought to deserve Regard; and it seems to have been the Refinement of later Ages, and the Conceit of saying uncommon Things, which have thrown any sort of Difficulties in the Way: But, as real Sense, and a Sobriety of Reasoning, are not the peculiar Characters of these Times, there will be less Occasion to give into the modern Humour of Questioning: And if Authority be of any Weight, we have greater Inducements to build on the Wisdom of former Times, than of the present.

However, not to rest on this, I propose to shew the Force of the Argument before us, by establishing these Two Things;

1. That Prophecies and Miracles, under the Conditions before stated, are properly Divine Credentials. And,
2. That to suppose such Credentials produced

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duced without any real Divine Commission corresponding to them, is inconsistent with the known Attributes of God.

In the Point before us some things must be necessarily presupposed; and which, therefore, we may assume, without a formal Proof of them. Thus we here take for granted, that there is a God;—that he exercises a Providence over the World; —and that this Providence is administered according to the strictest Rules of Justice, Goodness, and Wisdom. All these things we do here assume; because the Question about the Argument drawn from Prophecies and Miracles, doth not properly concern *Atheists*, but *Deists*. These things, therefore, being taken for granted, I do affirm, and shall endeavour to shew, that Prophecies and Miracles, rightly circumstanced, are properly Divine Credentials.

In relation to Miracles, Disputes have been raised by Writers, whether they must necessarily be referred to God himself; or whether they may not, many of them at least, be within the Powers of superior created Beings; and some Question of the same kind may possibly be raised with regard to Prophecies: But both of them are supposed, in the pre-

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sent Debate, to exceed the Capacities of Man; and, consequently, must refer us to some superior Being, whose Power, or whose Knowledge, is more than human. At the same time, it is supposed, there are Instances of both, in which God alone is, or can be, concerned. There are Miracles above the Power of any subordinate Being; those, at least, which imply a creative Power in their Production: And as to Prophecies, perhaps, in all Instances of those which are truly such, a Divine Foreknowledge is requisite. Thus far we may, with great Assurance, affirm, God must be their Author; unless in those few Cases (if such there are) of which an Account may be given from the Mechanism of the World.

Now in all Instances, whether of Prophecies or Miracles, whereof God is the Author, they must, when properly applied, be esteemed Divine Credentials; because they are strictly Divine Interpositions in favour of a Person, who claims an Authority from God. What do we mean by a Credential in other Cases, but some Act done, or Instrument signed, whereby it is declared, or understood to be so, that the Person who alleges it, is impowered to transact Affairs for another?

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The Meaning of which Credentials is from Use and Custom sufficiently known, though there should be no necessary Connexion between the Sign itself, and the Matter signified: But in the present Case, where the Prophecies or Miracles are supposed to require the immediate Act of God, their Meaning is most certain and manifest; and there is a necessary Connexion between the Proof alleged, and the Thing intended to be proved by it.

To explain this in the Case of Prophecies; those especially which point out a future Divine Teacher, and in their First Delivery were declared to be Marks, whereby this Teacher should be known: A Person in Time appears, in whom all these Marks center; who appeals to these ancient Prophecies now accomplished in him, and claims a Divine Authority in virtue of their Accomplishment. Can it be questioned, whether those Prophecies, so fulfilled, are Divine Credentials? May we not reason thus: As the Marks we are speaking of were originally declared by God; as the Person, in whom they should appear, was foreshewn to be a Prophet; as it must be the Work of an extraordinary Providence, that all these Marks should be

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united in any One Person ; and as he, to whom they belong, claims a Divine Commission on this Foot ;—God must be understood from hence to point him out to the World in a Way as manifest as can possibly be used by any Person, and in any Case. As he himself is supposed to have wrought the Signs, and to have given them their Signification, the Signs, so produced, can be esteemed as none other than Divine Credentials.

The Argument will have the same Force drawn from Miracles, wrought by the immediate Power of God. These likewise must be reckoned Divine Testimonials in favour of the Person, on whose Account they were wrought ; otherwise, why did God work them at all ? Why did he exert his own infinite Power at the Instance of one, who claimed the Honour of being sent by him, unless he intended Men should admit such Claim ? I do not indeed affirm, that Miracles can have none other End than to support the Pretensions to a Divine Authority : Yet, it may fairly be contended for, that this must be their principal End under the Circumstances here supposed ; and, without this, the working them will produce more Mischief to the *moral* and *religious*

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gious World, than it can possibly bring Advantage to the natural. I must, therefore, affirm here, as I did before in regard to Prophecies, that the Circumstances of the Miracles give them the Nature of Signs, and make them declare what the Teacher would have Men understand by them, that he is truly sent of God.

I have observed before, there is this Difference between Prophecies and Miracles, that the former must, probably in all Cases, be resolved into an immediate Divine Interposition; whereas the latter may, in many Cases, be wrought by superior created Agents. Now, whatever Force shall be allowed to the Argument drawn from those Miracles, which require the Divine Interposition, it may be thought to have less Strength where the Miracles may be produced by a created Power. It may be said in general, that Miracles of this kind can, at most, prove no more than the Countenance of that created Being who wrought them; and, therefore, must be impertinently alleged to support any Authority properly Divine.

This may seem, at first Sight, to deserve the greater Attention, because evil Spirits, many of them, having natural Powers supe-

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rior to those of Men, are thereby capable of performing Works, which exceed all human Power. If, therefore, Miracles of the Sort I am now speaking of have any Force, they may as well be alleged in favour of Error, as of Truth; and an Argument, which will equally conclude both Ways, is properly no Argument at all.

Upon Occasion of such Reasoning as this, it may perhaps be said, that God, as Supreme Governor of the World, will not permit created Beings to exert their Power in order to confirm an Imposture, ---in order to support any Authority, which is not strictly and properly Divine. But this may not be thought sufficient; because it seems to appear from Fact in the Old Testament, and to be supposed by our Blessed Saviour in the New, that evil Beings may be permitted to work Miracles; and, which is more, with an Intention to deceive the Credulous. Still, under proper Circumstances, Miracles wrought by created Beings, in Support of a Divine Commission, will have their Force, and conclude most strongly.

As I am here speaking concerning those Miracles, which may be within the Power of created Agents, this should be observed, that
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it is possible (so far as we consider the Nature of the Work itself) that different Beings may at the same time be capable of working Miracles, and that for different, and even opposite Purposes. In order, therefore, to shew the Force of the Argument I am upon, it will be proper to note here, that the Miracles wrought are either *unopposed* by others of any kind, or else opposed by others of the same or of different kinds.

In the First Case, we suppose the Miracles wrought to be absolutely unopposed. On this Supposition, if the Conditions before insisted on be observed; that is, if the Miracles are rightly applied, and the Matters taught duly qualified; the Argument deduced from them will be strong.

It will be a needless Question here to demand, whether they are wrought by evil or by good Spirits: Their being wrought at all, under these Circumstances, will be sufficient; because the Matters intended to be confirmed by them, are capable of Confirmation; and their being absolutely unopposed, will give abundant Force and Strength to them.

We may explain this Matter by considering the Affair of human Credentials. These, in many Cases, are the immediate Acts, not
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of the Person who gives these Credentials, but of his Ministers ; and, in almost all Cases, they are simply capable of being counterfeited : Yet this doth not derogate from the Force of Credentials, nor make them cease to be such. The Reason is this ; Because Impostures of this kind are restrained, as far as human Affairs will allow ; and, when discovered, are exemplarily punished. It is this which gives them their Force, that, although they do not always proceed immediately from the Person in whose Name they are given, yet they are presumed to pass with his Approbation ; and, when alleged (if known to be so alleged), by not disapproving, he virtually approves them.

To apply this to the Case in hand. God is the Supreme Governor of the World ; the Government of which he administers in many Particulars by subordinate Agents : But there is this great Difference, amongst others, between the Government administered by God, and that which is administered by Men, that He knows and sees every thing, and is capable of interposing at all times. Under this State of the Case, we shall see how impossible it is, that a Divine Credential should be forged. If a Man appears to claim a Com-
mission

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mission from God, and Miracles are wrought in his Favour, God must see and know this most perfectly ; and, therefore, He will, no doubt, disclaim these Pretensions, if mere Pretensions, unless the Imposture be, on other Accounts, so manifest, as to discredit and ruin itself. Not to do so, can be esteemed none otherwise than as an Approbation of the Claim ; and the Miracles so wrought under the Eye of Providence, and whilst the same Providence can counteract them, if it pleases, must have the same Effect as if they had been immediately wrought by God.

I am now to consider those Miracles which are opposed by others of the same, or of a different kind ; in which Case the Miracles alleged by the opposite Claimants, must be Instances either of Power equal, or of Power unequal.

The former (as hath been observed already) is a Case rather supposeable in Imagination, than to be admitted as Fact ; a thing which never yet happened, and, I believe, never can : For, allowing a wise Providence, we cannot presume that any Power directly exerted against God himself, will be equal to that which is exerted in his Service. Yet, if this be still insisted on as a Case which *may* happen,

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happen, the Consequence will be only this; that such opposite Miracles, manifesting equal Power, must mutually destroy each other's Effect; and, therefore, can have no Influence on the present Argument.

If, in the Miracles wrought by opposite Claimants, the Power manifested on each Side be unequal, then Credit will be due where the greatest Power is shewn. Superiority of Power I do affirm, must, in such Instances, argue a Superiority of Right; not only because it is incredible, that God should permit a Power, exercised against his Will, to be superior to that which is exercised by his Will, — but likewise, because, in this Contest, the Excess of Power manifested on one side, will be so much Power absolutely unopposed; in which Way of Stating it, this Case will fall in with that before determined, and be concluded by the same Arguments.

It still remains, in order to establish the full Force of the Argument before us, that I should shew, in like manner, that to suppose the Credentials, now treated of, without a Divine Commission corresponding to them, is inconsistent with the known Attributes of God.

And the First which arises to our Thoughts
on

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on this Occasion, is VERACITY; that is, a conforming outward Manifestations to the Intention and inward Sense of Things. It is upon this Perfection, which is inseparable from the Divine Nature, that we build all *Natural Religion*; for the Establishment of which we are obliged to argue in some such Manner as this; *viz.* That, as God hath been pleased to bestow its proper Nature on every thing, and to place it in certain Relations to all others, from whence a Rule of Action results;—so, by doing this, He declares his Will, that each intelligent Being should act agreeably. Yet, vain is all this Reasoning, if we cannot depend on the exact Correspondency between these Appearances of Intention, and the Matters which seem to be intended by them. But if, in this Case, our Reasoning be allowed, it will equally hold as to the Argument we are upon; for the Divine Will in the one Case is not more strongly declared than in the other. Prophecies and Miracles duly circumstanced, as being directly, or at least by just Interpretation, Divine Interpositions, in favour of Claims pretended to be Divine, do as clearly express God's Intention, as any of the ordinary Works of Nature can possibly do; and therefore

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fore we cannot derogate from them, or disallow their Force, without such an Impeachment of the Divine Veracity, as will render even Natural Religion itself precarious.

God is, and must be, TRUE; but He is likewise WISE: And it is no more consistent with Wisdom than with Truth, thus outwardly to declare what is not sincerely meant. We may say of Craft, and the little Arts of Deceit in general, that as they proceed from low Views, so they likewise argue some Defect in the Understanding, which is incapable of suggesting better Measures of Conduct. But this kind of Arguing will appear stronger in the Matter I am now treating of. God, as Supreme Governor of the World, is concerned, in point of Wisdom, to assert and maintain his own Government; and, therefore, not to permit his Authority to be claimed and exercised by others, without, and even against, his Will; especially where the Credentials produced are such, as cannot be disproved without a Divine Interposition. Would even a human Magistrate suffer his Name to be used, and his Commission pretended, against his Will,—and this under the strongest Appearances of Right? Would he suffer this to be done knowingly, and even in
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his own immediate Presence? Or, if he should, would he not hereby give up his Authority to others, and gradually make them independent on himself? Would this in a Man be consistent, I will not say barely with Wisdom, but even with common Sense? How then can we suppose, that the All-wise Governor of the World should hold the Reins of Government so weakly, and permit his Authority to be invaded, even in the most momentous Point, the moral and religious Administration of Things?

Yet these before-mentioned are not the only Attributes concerned in the present Question. The Divine Goodness is here likewise interested; which can, by no means, admit of such a Conduct as shall overlook the best Interests of Mankind. It is inconceivable, that Goodness, which was the original Motive to the creating us, should desert us as soon as we were created, and give us up to the Management and Influence of malicious Beings;---that it should give those up, who are most desirous of knowing and obeying God; for these are the Persons, who are most likely to be wrought on by Divine Credentials. If God be supposed to desert us so much, and to permit us to be reduced
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to such Circumstances, that the better the Man, the more likely he is to miscarry in his eternal Concerns, what is Being itself, worth? Upon this Supposition, might we not properly lament in some such Form as this; Better had it been for us, if we had not been born?

To take one Step farther, and to bring the Argument to a Head. We cannot deny the Conclusion I have hitherto endeavoured to establish, without subverting the Divine EQUITY and JUSTICE: For though, on our Part, we have no direct Claim from God of those Advantages which may make our Being desirable, yet we may certainly depend on it, that our Being shall not, without our own Fault, be made worse than Not-Being: And upon this Foot we argue against that monstrous Doctrine, which represents the greater Part of Mankind as eternally reprobated, without any Regard to their future State or Conduct. Now, if there be not a Divine Commission certainly correspondent to a Divine Credential, the State of Mankind is miserable beyond Expression;—miserable without their own Fault;—so much the more miserable, as they were the more free from Fault: For Divine Credentials naturally lead
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to the Belief of a Divine Commission; which (as I before observed) those are most likely to give Attention to, who are best and most virtuously disposed. And shall this very Virtue (which one might think would be the justest Recommendation) expose them but to more certain Ruin? --- make them the more liable to err, by how much they are the more desirous of avoiding Error? To carry this Point yet farther; Shall Men, by admitting a Divine Commission, on the Foot hitherto insisted on, discharge a Duty (for a Duty it must be, to believe God on his own Testimony); and shall this itself be esteemed a Fault? that is, Shall the same Thing at the same Time be both Duty and Sin? Or, if this be no Fault, must we not say, that Credentials of this sort are to us the sufficient Proofs of a Divine Commission?

Upon the whole then, the Force of the Argument drawn from Prophecies and Miracles will consist in this: As these have been shewn to be properly Divine Credentials, we cannot dispute the Sufficiency of that Evidence which arises from them, without subverting the very Ground of Natural Religion itself; without impeaching the Truth, and Goodness, and Wisdom, and Justice, of God;

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without denying that these are Attributes of the Divine Nature ; in short, without denying, virtually at least, that there is a God at all. For, as God cannot be without these Attributes ; — nor these Attributes without their proper Effects ; ---nor these Effects subsist, where Attestations properly Divine may be supposed to deceive us ; ---so, I presume, there is no denying the Force of this Argument, without recurring at last to ATHEISM itself.

To say the Truth, as the Cause of Deism hath been managed, of late Years especially, I do not see how our Adversaries can be consistent with themselves, unless they inwardly favour something which they care not openly to declare. It is in vain to declaim against Superstition and human Impositions (as they are pleased to call things which deserve much better Names), whilst they do it on such a Foot, as shall equally disparage the most unquestionable Points even of Natural Religion. These Proceedings do not shew, that such Men have at the Bottom any greater Regard for real DEISM, than for real CHRISTIANITY.

It is time I should have done ; and therefore I shall just offer one short Reflection.

The

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The Subject I have handled is of great Importance ; and, I conceive, not at all unsuitable to the present Solemnity : For, whilst we are commemorating the Incarnation of Christ, what can be more proper than to turn our Thoughts to that Mission, which can alone make his Incarnation of real Advantage to us ? But whilst we reflect on his Mission, the Proofs of it must naturally offer themselves ; and it becomes us to attend to them most carefully. These, our Saviour himself tells us, are Prophecies and Miracles ; ---Proofs of late contested, and which therefore I have, in some sort, endeavoured to justify. The farther Improvement of this great Argument I must recommend to your own pious and better Meditations.

S E R M O N X I.

St. PAUL's Difficulties and Distresses
considered and applied.

2 COR. xi. 23.

— *In Labours more abundant ; in Stripes
above measure ; in Prisons more frequent ;
in Deaths oft.*

OUR Apostle in these Words, briefly re-
presents to us the Difficulties and Di-
stresses he had undergone ; and that
not in a weak or complaining Manner (as
a Person of ordinary Courage would be apt to
do) but even *in a Confidence of Boasting*, [ver.
17.] and as Matter of singular Triumph. *If
I must needs glory, saith he, I will glory of
the Things which concern mine Infirmities.*
[ver. 30.]

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The Case was, some *false Apostles*, that is, Seducers, had crept in amongst the *Corinthians*: And in order to spread their pernicious Doctrines with more Success, endeavoured to alienate their Affections from our Apostle. What little Arts they used to this Purpose,—whether by magnifying themselves, or undervaluing *St. Paul*, may be learned from this and the foregoing Chapter: And it appears, I think, pretty plainly, that, bad as their Cause was, they had some Prospect of succeeding. Thus, our Apostle tells us, *ver. 3. But I fear, lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve thro' his Subtlety, so your Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity which is in Christ.*

No wonder therefore was it, if our Apostle, conscious of his own Authority, and jealous of the *Corinthians* Faith, should oppose these Proceedings with Vigour;—should step a little out of his usual Way, on an Occasion so concerning;—and, since these Seducers had compelled him to it, should support himself by alledging somewhat of his own singular Merits. *I suppose*, saith he, *I was not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles*; much less behind those who had endeavoured to undervalue him.

Yet, it is remarkable, that he hath used particular

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particular Discretion in the Management of this Affair, and shewn his Modesty, even in the very Article of his Boasting. For, what are the Particulars he hath chosen to insist on? —These principally;—the Greatness and Extent of his apostolical Labours;—the Difficulties he met with in going thro' them;—the Disgrace, the Pain, and the Confinement he had suffered; and, lastly, the extreme Hazard he had frequently run even of Death itself; in all which respects, he not only exceeded those Persons with whom he was then contending, but even the greatest of the true Ministers and Apostles of *Christ*. —*In Labours more abundant; in Stripes above measure; in Prisons more frequent; in Deaths oft.*

In the farther Prosecution of these Words, I shall,

First, offer some Remarks on the Grounds and Occasions of those Difficulties our Apostle met with.

Secondly, I shall consider the Constancy with which he bare them, and the Reasons which supported him under them. And,

Lastly, apply what shall be delivered under the former Heads, to ourselves.

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No Question can be made, but *St. Paul* was as liable as other Men, to what are called the Calamities of Life. To these he must be subject, by the very Condition of his Nature ; and therefore we may conclude, without the Instructions of History, that he, as well as others, had his proper Share in these.

It is true indeed, Men differ from each other, as well with regard to Misfortunes as Advantages. Some enjoy, or suffer, eminently ; whilst others pass through this World, without being distinguished in regard to either. Yet, it is observable in every Man, that as he enjoys somewhat, so he suffers somewhat likewise : And as the one serves to sweeten Life, and to make it tolerable,—so the other to abate that quick Sense of Pleasure, which might prejudice both our Morals and our Religion,

But without insisting on the Designs of Providence, in this Constitution, certain it is in Fact, that this is the real Constitution of Things. Natural Causes will ever produce their wonted Effects ; which, however good they may prove to the Whole, are often disadvantageous to particular Persons. And this Connexion of Causes and Effects, not being
easily

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easily discerned by every one, Misfortunes are, by weak Men, either imputed to blind Chance, — or else made an Argument against the Wisdom and Goodness of Providence.

In reference therefore to our Apostle, we may affirm, that one Part of his Difficulties must be owing to the present State and Condition of this World ; in which, as no complete Happiness can be enjoyed, so the Goods of Life are much qualified by Evil and Misfortune.

But in this, it is acknowledged, our Apostle was not singular : It does not appear to what Degree he suffered from hence : And when he declares, that *he laboured more abundantly than they all*,—this referred to Matters of another kind, and which sprung from very different Causes.

We are to note, in the next Place, that *St. Paul* was called to the Office of an Apostle ; —made a Minister of Christ in Affairs of Religion ; and sent forth to explain and teach it to the World :—An Office, at the best, and under the most favourable Circumstances, no less difficult than important.

If we view it, as it must appear in a standing Ministry, and without any of those super-
eminent

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eminent Powers and Duties, which distinguish the Apostleship from the perpetual Offices of the Church, we shall find it attended with a constant Care, not only about a Man's own Conduct, but the Behaviour of those committed to his Charge ; for whom he must be strictly accountable to God, and stand or fall, as he hath been faithful or negligent in his Master's Service. If others content themselves with regulating their own Lives, (a Work, in some Circumstances, difficult enough,) over and above this, he must form, in every way he is capable of doing it, the Faith and Manners of his Congregation ;—must instruct the Ignorant,—reduce the Erroneous,—encourage the Growth of every religious Principle,—and reclaim, if possible, the Abandoned. And whilst he is about this, labouring with a Zeal answerable to the Greatness of his Work,---with what Anxiety must he reflect on the Obstinacy of those, who refuse either to be instructed or reclaimed ! With what bitter Concern must he think, that however he hath saved his own Soul, yet they have lost theirs ; and that he himself must, one Day, be Evidence against them. I have just touched on some of the Difficulties, which attend the ordinary Discharge of the pastoral Office :

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Office : These our Apostle must have gone through and felt, perhaps, in an higher Degree than any other Man did, because he was inspired with a more lively Zeal for attempting Difficulties, than any other Man was.

But, beyond this, the Times were the least favourable that could be : He was called to this Office long before the Christian Religion had gained any tolerable Footing ; and so, obliged not merely to cultivate a Seed already sown, but to plant it ;---and (which was still more troublesome,) to clear the Ground, and to prepare the Soil. To be more plain ; the Business of *St. Paul* was not what ours is at present, merely to enter into the Labours of other Men, and to keep alive that Sense of Religion, which is already planted in Men's Breasts ;---but, he was to begin anew ; to teach them what they knew nothing of before, that *God had appointed a Day, in which he would judge all Men in Righteousness, by that Man whom he had ordained; whereof he had given Assurance unto all Men, in that he had raised him from the Dead.* [*Acts xvii. 31.*] In consequence of which, all the Doctrines Christ taught, were to be received, and all the Precepts he delivered, to be obeyed. But, alas ! Men were prepossessed with other Sentiments :

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Sentiments : They had been trained up in different Forms of Religion ;—had early imbibed Principles which they reckoned sacred, and been taught Practices they knew not how to leave. And yet Christianity was introduced to remove these Prejudices, and to reform these Corruptions, in a manner born with them ;—at least, as difficult to be mastered, as things which we reckon natural.

The Labours of our Apostle, from hence arising, must appear to have been great, tho' they had been confined to one Country only. But, as he was, by way of Eminence, the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, his Cares were extended farther; and the Number of Churches planted by him, are Proof, as well of the Pains he took, as of the Blessing which attended him. Hence we find, that in the History of the New Testament, *St. Paul* makes a nobler Figure than any other of the Apostles : As his Labours were more extensive, they were greater : An Argument of the Superiority both of his Zeal and his Abilities. Even this very Church of *Corinth*, to which the present Epistle is directed, and where his artful Adversaries endeavoured to supplant him, was the Produce of his own Labour in Christ ; planted by his first Preaching,

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ing, cherished under his Inspection, and watered by the fruitful Instructions imparted to them by his Epistles.

To the Observations already offered, we may add Difficulties, which must arise from the large Extent of his apostolical Government. Of this he speaks at the 28th ver. of this Chapter; *Beside those things which are without, that which cometh on me daily, the Care of all the Churches.* Not that our Apostle hereby intimates any Universality of Jurisdiction (this was far from him); though, if our Adversaries of the Church of *Rome* had any thing so much to the Advantage of *St. Peter*, as these Words seem favourable to *St. Paul*, they would triumph without End:—All that he intends, is this; that the several Churches planted by him, were subject to his Authority; and we want not to be taught, that Difficulties there are, as well in retaining a Conquest, as making it. The particular Circumstances of the Times, made this Affair still more arduous; because our Apostle had not only the common Adversaries of our Faith to contend with,—but those crafty Seducers likewise, who endeavoured to corrupt what they were unable to destroy. Many Instances of this kind we meet with in his

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Epistles ; and, in truth, several of them seem to have been wrote with this Design principally, to support his Authority, — to clear the Truth, and to guard against the Insinuations, rather of the deceitful Heretic, than of the declared Unbeliever. This therefore is a Second Source of the Labours and Difficulties our Apostle met with ; *viz.* The Nature and Extent of the Office he sustained, especially in that trying Age of the Church.

However, the principal Difficulties he insists on, and which he hath chosen to mark out particularly, are such as did not arise from the Nature or Extent of his Office, — but from the Rage and Malice of Men. His Office indeed required him to stand foremost, and to meet those Difficulties, if they should chance to be raised against him ; but we must search farther for their true Source and Original.

It is to be noted therefore, that the World was at that time divided between the *Jews* and *Gentiles* ; whereof the former were influenced by a Dispensation truly Divine, — and the latter guided by certain Schemes of Religion, in reality, of mere human Institution, but believed to be divine likewise. These different Persons were very strongly attached

to

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to the several Forms under which they had been bred ; and transported with such a Zeal for the Religion of their Fathers, that they could not bear the least Invasion of it with Patience. To which may be added, that the Christian Scheme was more strict and rigorous, than those which they had reckoned sacred, and deprived them of many Liberties they had hitherto enjoyed, and practised without Remorse. The Consequence was none other than might naturally be expected : They opposed this new Institution with Vigour ; and endeavoured, in every way they could, to suppress it. Hence it came to pass (as our Saviour foretold) that the Adversaries of the Christian Faith treated the Persons who taught it, in the most severe and cruel Manner ; that *the very Brother delivered up the Brother to Death ; and the Father the Child : and the Children rose up against their Parents, and caused them to be put to Death.* [Mat. x. 21.]—*They were hated of all Men for Christ's Name sake ;* [ver. 22.] *and those who killed them, thought they did God Service.* [John xvi. 2.]

As to the Particulars of *St. Paul's* Sufferings on this Account, we have them in the Chapter from whence my Text is chosen ;
where

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where he tells us,—*Of the Jews, Five times received I Forty Stripes save one.—Thrice was I beaten with Rods ; Once was I stoned ; Thrice I suffered Shipwreck ; a Night and a Day have I been in the Deep :—In journeying often,—in Perils of Waters,—in Perils of Robbers,—in Perils by mine own Countrymen,—in Perils by the Heathen,—in Perils in the City,—in Perils in the Wilderness,—in Perils in the Sea,—in Perils among false Brethren.—In Weariness and Painfulness,—in Watchings often,—in Hunger and Thirst,—in Fastings often,—in Cold and Nakedness.* [2 Cor. xi. 24, 25, 26, 27.]

This fierce Opposition to the Cause of Christ, which created so many Difficulties to *St. Paul*, and at length procured his Death, was not however extinguished with him,—but continued to rage, in a greater or less Degree, for Three Centuries together ; so that during the greatest Part of that Time, to profess Christianity, was, in the severest Sense of the Expression, to renounce the World ;—there being no Advantage of Life, no not even Life itself, secure on those Terms : Till at last it pleased God, who had hitherto wonderfully maintained his Servants, in the most afflicted Condition, to turn the Hearts
of

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of the reigning Powers,—and to establish the Truth by that very Authority, which had been employed for its Destruction.

Having seen thus far, from what Causes the Difficulties our Apostle met with, proceeded, I shall now pass on to my

Second General Head ; *viz.* To consider the Constancy with which he bore them, and the Reasons which supported him under them.

Of this it will be thought good Proof, that no Difficulties or Distresses he underwent, could prevail with him, either to desert the Cause he had undertaken ; or, even to slacken his Endeavours in promoting it. And yet he might have avoided no small Share of Trouble, by shewing himself less vigorous in his Office ; and by giving up what he had once contended for, might not only have secured his Life, but probably have obtained any Advantages he might desire. But, does it appear he ever once staggered, or admitted the least Deliberation with himself, whether, on the one hand, he should deny God, and live,—or, on the other, obey God, and die. This great Man was ready and prepared for all Events ; and so far from doing any thing

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ill, to avoid Persecution, that no Persuasions could prevail with him so much as to alter his intended Course on that Account: For, when *the Disciples besought him not to go up to Jerusalem*, our Apostle, with an equal Mixture of Tenderness and Resolution, answered, *What mean ye to weep, and break mine Heart? For, I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of the Lord Jesus.* [Acts xxi. 12, 13.]

It is farther observable to the same Purpose, that great as his Sufferings were, and sensible, as we may suppose one delicately bred, must be, of suffering (for *St. Paul* was no ordinary Person)---yet he no-where complains in such a manner, as to betray the least Want of Fortitude. He had indeed a very tender Feeling of the Calamities which beset other Men; and he laboured with remarkable Zeal to relieve them: But, as to what concerned himself, he seemed to have lost all Regard; ever more sollicitous about the Sufferings of other Men, than his own.

Or, if he found himself obliged (as sometimes he was, and particularly in Opposition to his crafty Opposers) to mention any thing of his Distresses, he did it not, either to discharge his own Grief, or to move Compassion

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sion in other Men, —but to justify his Zeal in propagating the Gospel. For this purpose (not to mention other Instances) he recounted his Sufferings in the Words of my Text; and endeavoured to convince his *Corinthians* by this, that he was not more backward in the Christian Cause, than those Persons who reproached him. Of these Sufferings he boasted, and in these he gloried; so far from any fearful Apprehensions of what was yet to come, or from shrinking meanly under what he suffered, that he rejoiced in his Sufferings; and made his Tribulations Matter of Triumph. So much did the Consciousness of his Innocence; and Assurance of a good Cause, prevail above the Terrors of human Power and Malice.

I am insensibly led by this, to enquire somewhat distinctly into the Reasons which fortified our Apostles Mind, and enabled him to bear his Difficulties. These were of different Kinds, and suited to the several Hardships and Distresses he met with.

As to the ordinary Calamities of Life, and those which are common to Men, he supported himself, as others likewise may, by ordinary and common Arguments. Such, for Instance, are these:

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That

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That as Afflictions are brought on us by the Appointment of God, so we ought to submit to them, as the Inflictions of a Power we neither must nor can contend with. *Shall the Thing that is formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* [Rom. ix. 20.] *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.* [Isai. xlv. 9.]

He argued likewise, that as God's Authority is supreme, so his Tenderness is infinite : And therefore, since he delighteth not to grieve us, he ever proposes some important Ends, in the Sufferings he inflicts on us. He sees perhaps that we are not able to bear Prosperity ; and that an adverse State will prove the fittest to forward our Growth in Virtue. When this proves the Case, the Calamities we endure, should be considered under the Notion of Discipline ; and rather brought on us to shew his Love, than his Authority. Thus *St. Paul* expressly argues, *God chasteneth us for our Profit, that we may be Partakers of his Holiness* [Heb. xii. 10.]

It was farther no small Consolation to him, that the Sufferings he should endure, must always be proportioned to his Abilities ; — that as he was in the Hands of a gracious Creator, he was fully assured, *God would not suffer*

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suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but would, with the Temptation, make a way to escape, that he might be able to bear it.

[1 Cor. x. 13.] His Part therefore was to do his best, and put forth his Strength, as knowing, that on this Condition his State must be secure; and that no Man falls who is not drawn aside by his own foolish Lusts, or his own cowardly Apprehensions.

I am sensible what a Variety of other Reasons might be assigned to this Purpose; which, to a Person of our Apostle's Sagacity, must be ever ready,—and, no doubt, had a mighty Influence on his Mind: But I content myself with these, for this Reason especially, because I find them expressly mentioned by our Apostle.

The Difficulties which arose, from the Nature and Extent of the Apostolical Office, as they were different in kind, from those just before mentioned, so he supported himself under them, by other Considerations; by those which were best suited to the Nature of those Difficulties. What is here intended, relates principally to the Activity and Care, which the Discharge of this high Office required, whether to convince the Unbelieving, or to secure and improve the Faithful. What

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Arguments then are most useful to this Purpose ? Those, certainly, which are drawn from the great Ends served by this Office ; viz. The promoting the most important Interests of Men,—and the highest Honour of God.

St. Paul (as I have said before) was made a Minister of Christ, in Affairs of Religion,—and sent forth to explain and teach it to the World ; on which account he was concerned, not merely to regulate his own Life, but to form, in every way he was capable of doing it, the Faith and Manners of others. This Religion was not barely some particular Mode of the general Religion, of itself indifferent, and which Men might be as well without ; —but it carried Matters farther than any other Schemes had ever done : It reformed their Corruptions, and supplied their Defects ; and gave Men Assurance (which nothing else could do) of the Pardon of Sin, on the Condition of Repentance. The Doctrines it held forth were high, and important ; but which, without the Light it gave, were in a great measure impossible to be known. Nor were the Precepts it delivered of less Consequence to the World ; since they direct us in every thing fit and proper to be done by

us,

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us, whatever our Condition in Life may be: So that we may affirm, with reasonable Assurance, not only that this is the most perfect Scheme that was ever offered, but likewise, that this Religion alone proposes to us the Means proper and necessary for our Salvation. On this Foot, whilst our Apostle was inculcating and spreading this Religion, and endeavouring to form the Lives of his Converts, by the noble Rules it prescribes, he was attempting, what was of the utmost Importance to them, to rescue them from the Jaws of Death, to promote their eternal Happiness, —and *to deliver them from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God.* [Rom. viii. 21.] A Consideration this, which will fully justify all the Activity and Care which can be used, —and cannot fail (if duly attended to) of influencing every generous Mind. For, what public Good can a Man pursue, in Preference to this, which gives a Worth to every other Good, and, if neglected, must render every other Advantage useless? The Argument had its proper Weight with our Apostle; who appears to have been ardently affected to the Interests of Men, and, upon every Occasion, expressed this Affection in the strongest Terms.

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Thus, he declares, *my Heart's Desire and Prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* [Rom. x. i.] And, in another Place, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my Brethren, my Kinsmen, according to the Flesh.* [Rom. ix. 3.]

And that it may not be presumed, this Affection was confined to the *Jews* alone, let us see in what a tender Manner he writes to the *Corinthians*: *Out of much Affliction and Tenderness of Heart, I wrote unto you with many Tears; not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the Love which I have more abundantly unto you.* [2 Cor. ii. 4.]

From these Expressions, and many others of the same kind, which we meet with in his Epistles, it may fairly be concluded, that the ardent Affection our Apostle had to the supreme Interests of Men, as it moved him to pursue these Interests with Vigour, so it served to support him in a good Degree, under the Difficulties which crossed him.

But, besides this, it is farther to be observed, that the Honour of God was as much concerned in this Affair, as the Interest of Men;—That Honour, which a good Man will ever reckon sacred; and, which the Office of an Apostle made it his more peculiar Business to promote. I

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I speak not here of the essential Honour and Majesty of God, which no Actions of Men can either promote or diminish ; but I mean, the Manifestation and Sense of the Divine Attributes, best illustrated by those Actions of his Creatures, which are either Imitations of these Perfections, or else express their Admiration of them.

With regard therefore to Religion,—the Christian Religion I mean, the Doctrines of it are more perfect Declarations of the Divine Attributes, than were ever made before ; so that, as there are some things concerning the Divine Nature hereby manifested, of which the World had hitherto no manner of Notion, there are others likewise, concerning which, either their Belief was uncertain, or their Conceptions defective. By this means are we taught to think of God most suitably to his Nature, that is, to honour him in our Thoughts and Apprehensions. But the Precepts which it delivers, are still a farther Evidence of what I am now upon ; *viz.* That whilst our Apostle was discharging his Office with all possible Zeal, he was doing the most that in him lay, to promote the real Honour of God. For, what are the Duties prescribed to us by our Religion ? Are they not such as
are

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are most worthy of God to require ;—most fit and reasonable in themselves ;—many of them but Transcripts of his own Example ; and others, Expressions of our Relation to, and Dependence on, him ? Are they not all of them the natural Homage of a Creature to his Creator,—of a reasonable Creature, to his ever bountiful and gracious Creator ? If this be true, then, in the Name of common Sense, how can the Glory of God be more properly advanced, than by spreading the Knowledge of these Duties, as far as possible, —by imprinting the Sense of them on Mens Minds,—by cherishing such noble Principles,—by defending them against the Insolence of those, who would either weaken or destroy them ; in short, by doing as the Apostle did,—*being instant in Season and out of Season,—and becoming every thing to every Man, that he might, in this respect, gain the more.* How far this Consideration moved St. Paul, may fairly be inferred from his own standing Rule ; viz. *That whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the Glory of God.* [1 Cor. x. 31.] He who insists, that the most ordinary Actions of Life should respect this End, could not surely lose Sight of it, in the most important Instances ;
and

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and therefore we may be certain, that the Con-
sciousness of pursuing so noble a Design, must
animate him in opposing the Difficulties he
met with.

Much of what hath been said already was
of Service likewise, to arm him against those
Distresses, which the Malice of Men brought
upon him, for the sake of the Gospel. The
same earnest Desire of doing Good to the
World, and Honour to his Creator, which
quickened him in the ordinary Discharge of
his Apostolical Office, supported him in bear-
ing those Afflictions, he must undergo in dis-
charging it.

And, in Truth, unless he were constant
and resolute in this respect, all he had done
hitherto would be of little Consequence.
Had he dreaded Persecution in such a De-
gree, as to deny the Truth he had taught
formerly, what Credit could his Preaching
meet with? Or, if some few should have be-
lieved him notwithstanding, and have ascribed
his Apostacy to the Weakness of his Mind,
and the Influence of Terror,—yet others
would have given it a different Turn, and have
considered his Declarations, however extort-
ed; as the strongest Proofs of Guilt.—Or if,
struck with a Sense of his Error, he should

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retract once more, and endeavour to make Amends, by returning to that Truth he had deserted,---yet how few would have thought themselves concerned to believe him, any more at one time than another? So that, on this Foot, the Cause he had undertaken must have failed entirely, and his own Evidence be unhappily turned against itself.--- Or if, in order to avoid Suffering, he had contented himself with being silent (and this probably would have satisfied his Adversaries) yet still, how pernicious must the Consequence have been to the Cause of Christ! On this Supposition, the Christian Religion could not have been spread at all, ---or if spread, yet how could it have maintained itself --- have been transmitted to future Ages, or confirmed in such a Manner, as to gain any lasting Credit? The Miracles which were wrought in its Favour, could affect those only who saw them, or were assured of them: And since Eye-witnesses could be few, in Comparison with those who must believe upon Testimony,---bare Silence would be as mischievous, almost in this First Age of the Church, as open and direct Apostacy. To this may be added, that the Firmness, which the Apostles shewed, under the heaviest

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heaviest Torments inflicted on them, gave no small Weight to the Miracles which they wrought,—not only, as it served to engage the Attention, but likewise as it was the truest Proof of their Sincerity. It was an Argument, that they were thoroughly persuaded themselves, of what they presumed to inculcate on others ; and that the Facts alledged as miraculous, were, in truth, what they pretended to be, owing to the extraordinary Power of God. The Credit of what they did, as well as what they taught, depended in a great measure on this : It is with this Consideration we now combat the Obstinacy of Unbelievers ;—and it is upon this account principally, that the Blood of the Martyrs was the Seed of the Church.

No Wonder then, that the Supreme Being, merciful as he is, should yet permit his most faithful Servants to suffer so exceedingly. The Religion he was pleased to impart to the World, could not be sufficiently confirmed in any other Way. Though delivered originally by God, it must be propagated by Men chosen out for that Purpose, and proved to be divine, in a manner unexceptionable : But this could not be done, unless it were credited by their Sufferings, and sealed by their Blood, shed in the Defence of it.

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These, and many other Reflections to the same Purpose, had a mighty Influence on our Apostle. It appears, from many Passages in his Writings, he was sensible how hard a Work he undertook, when he set about converting the World. The Importance of the Thing well deserved the utmost Pains that could be taken in pursuing it: And therefore, since he saw that Afflictions would happen,—that they were necessary to give Weight and Credit to his Preaching,—to recommend it for the present, and to confirm it for the future,—he not only submitted to them with Patience, but even embraced them with some Sort of Pleasure: And to this Purpose, whilst he tells us in one Place, *that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution.* [2 Tim. iii. 12.] He declares as expressly in another, that he was *exceeding joyful in all his Tribulation.* [2 Cor. vii. 4.]

Nor was the Necessity of enduring Persecution, in order to carry on the Cause of Christ, the only Consideration which supported him in bearing it; he was farther animated by the Assurance of God's Favour, and the Prospect of a future Recompence;—of a Favour more comfortable than the Sense of any worldly Interest can be,----and of a Recompence

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compence which will make ample Amends for the forest Evils we may suffer :---In short, of a Favour no otherwise to be retained, than by giving up every thing in order to retain it ;---and of a Recompence to be hoped for on no other Condition, than adhering firmly to our Duty, whatever be the Consequence. Our Saviour knew thoroughly, what would happen to his Disciples ; and therefore, instead of flattering them (as some of them weakly flattered themselves) with the Hopes of worldly Grandeur and Happiness, he told them plainly, that *in this World they should have Tribulation* : But then he adds, *Be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World.* [*John xvi. 33.*] The Meaning of which seems to be this ; “ The Sense of my Favour, and the Influence of my Grace ; the Pardon of Sin assured by me, and the Promises of a Reward, which nothing can defeat, but your own Wickedness, or Folly, or Cowardice, are an Over-balance for all the World can do.” And therefore, in such Circumstances, this Enemy, formidable as he may be thought, hath perfectly lost his Power ; nor can you possibly be conquered, but by yourselves. In consequence of this, our Apostle exhorts the *Hebrews, not to cast away their Confidence, which*
hath

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bath great Recompence of Reward; for they had need of Patience, that after they had done the Will of God, they might receive the Promise. [Heb. x. 35, 36.] And our Blessed Lord himself pronounces those blessed, who are persecuted for Righteousness sake,---because great is their Reward in Heaven. [Mat. v. 10. 12.]

But, should it so happen, that having begun well, they should be afraid of proceeding, —should be awed by the Terrors of Men, —should desert the Faith, and deny Christ, rather than themselves; of what other Avail must this good Beginning prove, than to reproach the Wickedness and Folly of their Apostacy? *If any Man draw back, saith God, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him;--ver. 38. And if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins; ver. 26. All that Christ hath done for us, or we for ourselves, will be of no Consequence;---the Righteousness we once did, shall not be so much as mentioned; in the Wickedness that we do, shall we die.*

What *St. Paul* inculcated on others, had doubtless the most lively Effect upon himself: And therefore, we may conclude, that the Assurance of God's Favour, no otherwise to be

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be retained, but by Constancy and Perseverance, was one main Argument to support him in his Duty, and to enable him to bear those Calamities, which his Duty brought upon him.

To what hath been already offered, it may be proper to add, that by withdrawing in the Day of Trial, and by giving up the Truth, for fear of Suffering, he must not only forfeit all the Advantages of Perseverance, but expose himself to Miseries, infinitely greater than those he would avoid. This must be the Case, if what is so frequently delivered in Scripture, and by *St. Paul* himself in particular, obtain any Credit, *Whoso shall deny Christ before Men, him will Christ deny before his Father which is in Heaven* [Mat. x. 33.] *Who-soever will save his Life, shall lose it:—And what shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* [Mark viii. 35, 36.] To which *St. Paul* adds, *If we sin wilfully, that is, apostatise, nothing remaineth, but a fearful Looking-for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries* [Heb. x. 27.]

Nor hath our Blessed Lord merely threatened the timorous Apostate with disowning him at the last Day, and with all the Mises

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ries consequent thereupon,—but, to make the deeper Impression, he balances the Advantages and Disadvantages on both Sides ; *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt or maimed, than having Two Hands, or Two Feet, to be cast into everlasting Fire* [Mat. xviii. 8.]

Were there Occasion to enlarge on a Point so exceedingly plain, I might observe, that the Anger of God is infinitely more to be dreaded, than the Malice of Men ; not only, because his Power is extended farther, and reaches through all Ages ; whereas the utmost Men can do, affects us only in this Life ; but likewise, because human Power is dependent on the Divine. God may put a Stop to the Malice of our Enemies, if he judges proper ; and he will do it, when he sees it necessary ; or (which is altogether as much for our Advantage) he will strengthen and support us by his Grace. So that if, to avoid Persecution, Men give up their Faith, they not only exchange one Evil for a greater ;—but they basely run from that, which God, in his Mercy, might possibly have prevented. What is this, but to betray, as well a Want of Sense, as of Courage ?

It remains, in the last place, that I apply to ourselves what hath been already delivered under the former Heads. In

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In the general it may be observed, that if a Person of such singular Merits as our Apostle, met with so many Difficulties and Distresses, —we likewise should expect our Share of Suffering. For, surely, we cannot plead more for ourselves, than this Apostle could; and therefore ought not to be surpris'd if we meet with Calamities, as our Apostle did.

And when they happen (as happen they will, in some Part or other of Life) it will become us to consider the Example before us; to submit to God's Hand; to arm ourselves with Patience; and to rejoice (if we can bring ourselves to do so) in the very Afflictions we suffer.

What *St. Paul* endured, as it was of different Kinds, so he supported himself under it, by different Considerations. An Attention to these, will be equally serviceable to us, as far as our Circumstances may resemble his, the Difficulties we meet with be of the same Sort, or arise from a like Concurrence of Causes.

As to the ordinary Distresses of Life, these are common to Men, in all Ages of the World. Whatever Arguments therefore, to support Men under them, are applicable at one time, will equally be so at another: And as, in this respect, our Apostle represents in

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a greater or less Degree the State of every Man, so the Reasons which supported him, may support others likewise, if they will but attend to them, and make the same Use of them, as our Apostle did.

But Matters may appear otherwise, as to certain Difficulties, which may be thought somewhat peculiar to *St. Paul*; those I mean, which relate either to the Discharge of his apostolical Office,----or to those Storms of Persecution he was obliged to bear. Yet, upon a nearer View of Things, we shall not find ourselves entirely unconcerned: It will appear, that our Circumstances may in some sort resemble his;---that our Conduct therefore ought to be formed by his Example; and that the same Reasons which animated him, and were his Comfort in Distress, may prove the same to us likewise.

There is, it must be confessed, some Difference between the Condition of *St. Paul*, and other Men, as to what concerned the right Discharge of his apostolical Duty; and the Labours he was forced to undergo, were in some sort peculiar to him,----suited to his Office, and the particular Circumstances of the Times. Thus, for Instance; his Business was to bear witness to *Christ*, in a higher Sense,

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Sense than any Man can now do it ; to propagate his Religion at the first ; to combat the Prejudices of Men, bred up in contrary Notions, and firmly attached to their religious Persuasions ; to do this in many distant Parts of the World ; to plant Churches ; to appoint Under-workers ; to inspect their Conduct ; and to guard his numerous Flocks, as well against the Invasions of public Enemies, as the artful Insinuations of domestic. So far as this, our Apostle's Case was somewhat different from ours.

But yet, have not the standing Ministers of the Gospel enough to do, — I had almost said, more than enough ? If the Christian Religion hath been published, and, in many Places, received many Ages ago, — so that we have not the same unfortunate Prejudices to contend with as our Apostle had, — yet *unreasonable Men every Day arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

The very Foundation of our Religion hath been, — I will not say, barely questioned, — but publicly denied, — disputed against, — ridiculed ; the Advocates for this Cause traduced ; and their very Order vilified. The Persons who have behaved in this shocking Man-

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ner (though, God be thanked, they have not met with great Success) have gained some Profelytes,—enough at least to keep their Cause alive, and to continue these Blasphemies, with regard to *Christ*, and these Infidelities in relation to his Ministers. So that no one can apprehend that the Clergy, under these Circumstances, can possibly want Work, whilst their Religion is attacked so vigorously, and their Order abused so plentifully.

At the same time that some are at work to overthrow, if possible, the Foundation of our Faith, others are labouring to deprave its Doctrines, and to model them according to their own Fancies. These hope to insinuate their Corruptions with greater Ease, whilst those who would oppose them, are otherwise employed. But vain are such Presumptions: For as the Clergy are concerned to guard the Truth on every Side, so guard it some or other of them will,—as well against the Attacks of the deceitful Heretic, as the professed Unbeliever.

Besides the Employment which these Adversaries will find us, there are likewise a great Number of others to contend with; more particularly the Romish Emissaries, who, by the Progress they have made of late Years,
ought

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ought to alarm us with the quickest Sense of Danger.

Nay, though Men were all united in one Faith, and Communion, and, consequently, the Church free from every Kind of Adversary, both public and private, yet the ordinary Duties of the pastoral Office are full of Difficulty. To explain the Scriptures;—to inculcate the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity;—to rectify the Mistaken;—to improve the Well-disposed; and, to reclaim the Vicious; carry with them something more, than is to be met with in any other, even of the hardest Professions. And therefore, as the Duties of the standing Ministry, are, in every View of them, arduous, so they call for all the Assistances that can support Men in discharging them. Our State then, in this respect, though not the same entirely with the Apostle's,—yet does not vary from it so much, but the same Considerations, which were of Use to him, may be serviceable to us. We have the same important Interest to pursue as he had;—the Divine Honour may be as really promoted by us, as by him;—we are equally concerned to pursue these Ends; and the Sense of doing so, will as certainly give us Comfort and Satisfaction.

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faction. His Example, therefore, should be ever in our Eye, and the Reasons which supported him, ever present to our Minds. This will give us the same manly Spirit, with which *St. Paul* encountered Difficulties; and the God, who equally approves our Labours, will make the Work equally prosper in our Hands.

There remains but one thing more; *viz.* To apply what hath been said, concerning the persecuted State of *St. Paul*, to ourselves, as far as the present Circumstances of the Church will admit of. And here it must be owned, our Condition differs vastly from his: For whereas the reigning Powers were armed against him, and to profess Christianity, was highly penal, we enjoy the Protection of the Government; and our Faith is not merely tolerated but established. This we are obliged to recollect with Gratitude, sensible of the mighty Advantages we enjoy, above those of the more early Ages. Such a public and legal Persecution as *St. Paul* was exposed to, we are not only free from at present, but secure against the very Apprehension of it for the future; and therefore, it may be thought, at first View, that *St. Paul's* Example, in reference to Persecution, can be of no Consequence to us, Yet,

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Yet, we shall think otherwise, upon a more thorough View of Things. I cannot persuade myself, that Persecution is to be restrained to legal Prosecution, for the sake of religious Truth ; it seems rather to signify at large, a pursuing and destroying Men for discharging their Duty, whether this arise from public Authority, or from private Malice. Or if it should be thought, that Persecution, in the strict Acceptation of the Word, hath a reference only to legal Proceedings ; yet still, as Sufferings are the same to those who endure them, whether inflicted by Authority, or not ; — so Men distressed for their Duty, even by private Hands, may be said, in some sort, to be persecuted : And therefore, the Considerations which supported *St. Paul* in his Circumstances, will proportionably serve them in theirs.

If this be allowed (as surely it must) then there is no Condition of the Church, — no not the present flourishing Condition of it, in which the afore-mentioned Considerations will be useless. For are not Men daily laid under Difficulties, either for professing the true Faith, or practising the certain Duties of Religion ? In reference to the former, this happens indisputably, as often as a Clergyman suffers,

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purely as a Clergyman ;—or, a true Christian is reproached and ill treated, merely upon account of being a Christian ;—or, an Advocate for the true Faith, in Opposition to any modern Corruptions whatsoever, on that account, suffers either in his Fortune, or his Name.—With respect to the latter, this happens in all Cases, where the serious and sober Practice of Duty shall expose Men to the Scoffs and Insolencies of the Wicked ;—the sober Practice of it, I say ; for Religion is not properly concerned, where Men make themselves ridiculous by their own vain Affectation.

These lower Degrees of Persecution, as they have happened in every past Age, so they must be expected in every Age yet to come ;—in every Age which shall produce Instances of Unbelief and Wickedness : Men of the former Character, must of course be Enemies to Faith,—of the latter, to good Works.

But yet, let not the true Believer, or the sober and discrete Practiser of his Duty, be discouraged by these Means. The Apostles of Christ in general, and the Saint of this Day in particular, suffered much more for the same great Cause. The Greatness of the Cause

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Cause supported them in some measure: The extraordinary Rewards in View animated them still farther; and the absolute Necessity of Perseverance, in order to avoid infinitely greater Miseries than human Power could inflict, fixed them immoveably.—May the same strong Reasons for obeying God, at all Events, have an equal Influence on us; and may we never, through any Distresses of Life, —or Dread of Death, fall from him!

S E R-

SERMON XII.

The Condition of Mankind in general unhappy, without the Belief of a future State.

PART I.

1 COR. XV. 19.

If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.

IT was the Design of our Apostle, in this Chapter, to inculcate on his *Corinthians* the Doctrine of a future Resurrection : And this he doth by Two Sorts of Arguments, whereof One is more close and direct to the Point, and the other is more loose and indirect.

It

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It seems there subsisted, at the Time when this Epistle was written, a remarkable Sect amongst the *Jews*, I mean the *Sadducees*; which maintained the Self-sufficiency of Virtue, and that no Happiness was to be expected in any State to come hereafter. From this Sect it is probable there might be some *Corinthian* Converts; who, not being able at once to lay aside all their former Prejudices, imported some of them into the Christian Church,—and particularly the Disbelief concerning a future State. Persons of this Stamp may be supposed to reject the Doctrine of a Resurrection, chiefly upon that very Principle: And if this were the Case, our Apostle's Way of treating them, in the Words before us, must be exceeding proper; for it served at least to remove the greatest Difficulty about admitting a Resurrection,—and, consequently, to prepare their Minds for such other Considerations, as are more home to the Point he would establish.

Thus, though the Argument in the Text will directly prove no more than the Certainty of a future State, yet our Apostle hath alledged it, for a farther Purpose, with great Art,—as knowing, that if he could once conquer this great Prejudice of the *Corinthians*,

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thians, the lesser Difficulties would fail of course.

This Argument I shall consider, at present; in that Sense only which is most obvious, and as leading us directly to this Conclusion, that there must be a future better State of Things.

Now, what our Apostle here delivers, seems to carry in it these Two Positions ;

- I. That without the Hope of a better State to come hereafter, the Condition of Mankind in general must, upon a just Balance of Things, be esteemed unhappy.
- II. That upon a like Supposition, the Condition of those particularly intended by the Apostle, must be much worse, and more unhappy, than that of other Men. From whence our Apostle would be understood to infer,
- III. That, therefore, there must be a better State of Things to come hereafter.

Having cleared these Points, I shall, in the last place, make a Reflection or two upon the Whole.

And, First, I am to shew, that without the Hope of a better State to come hereafter, the
Condition

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Condition of Mankind in general must, upon a just Ballance of Things, be esteemed unhappy.

This Position, though it be not expressly delivered in the Words before us, yet seems to be implied in them; for the Words are, *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* It is not barely affirmed, that the Persons here intended by the Apostle, are, upon a certain Supposition, unhappy,—but, that they are *more unhappy* than other Men; and, consequently, that those others are, upon a like Supposition, unhappy likewise, though in a less Degree, and under fewer Aggravations. But, whether I shall be allowed to make this Conclusion or not, from our Apostle's Way of expressing himself in the Text, yet the Position itself is just and defensible, and of good Use in the Argument before us.

In order to form a Judgment concerning the Happiness or Unhappiness of human Life, it will be necessary to consider what Man's Enjoyments are,—what his Sufferings, and what Principles he is possessed of, which may conduce to heighten or abate either the one or the other. By duly ballancing these together, we may determine reasonably upon the
the

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the Point ; whereas, from a partial View, nothing can arise but Error or Uncertainty.

Mens Enjoyments may be reduced principally to these Two Heads ; *viz.* those of the Animal, and those of the Rational Kind ; In both which Respects, the Nature of Man makes him capable of a great deal, but his general State and Condition can allow but little.

In reference to Enjoyments purely animal, there will be no Occasion to compare Man with Beings of an inferior Kind ;—with Beasts ; which, being intended for nothing higher, may be furnished in some respects with nicer Organs of Sensation,---and, consequently, may have greater Pleasures of that kind, than Man can have. I shall draw no Argument to my Purpose from this Comparison ; because, however the Matter may appear upon Examination, yet human Happiness, arising not merely from gratifying the lower Part of his Nature, but the higher likewise, he may, upon the whole, have a great Advantage over inferior Creatures, however he may fall short of them in certain Particulars. Still, as Man is an Animal, his Enjoyments in that regard must not be overlooked : And as they have some Part in making up his

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Amount of Happiness, so they naturally offer themselves to our present Enquiry.

Now here it will be evident, upon our first Consideration of human Nature, that Man is capable of many and considerable Enjoyments of this kind ; as having implanted in him a Variety of Desires, from the Gratification of which, proper Enjoyments must arise. It is farther observable, from looking about us, that Providence hath furnished out the World with Objects suitable to every natural Desire : So that if the Condition of Mankind did not put it out of their Power to reach, or command these Objects, and if no other Causes intervened to vitiate their Enjoyment of them, a considerable Proportion of Happiness must follow ; — as much as is fit and proper for Creatures of this kind to have.

But we find the Case, in fact, to be very unfavourable. It falls to the Share of the Few only, to command more than the bare Necessaries of Life. Some, failing even in these, perish : And many gain them by hard Labour and Drudgery, — by painful Days, and sleepless Nights ; and even then with many Interruptions, during which they suffer the very Extremities of Want. Men of narrow Consideration, and who look no farther than
their

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their own personal Experience reaches, may think I strain Matters too far : But they might easily correct their Mistake, by attending to Accounts concerning other Parts of the World, and considering the Condition, not only of those who subsist in a State of Barbarity, without any of the Arts of Life, but of those who live under formed Governments, and amidst the Improvements even of Science. The Bulk of these are a needy, wretched Herd, just kept alive to feel that they *are* alive,—subsisting with Capacities of Enjoyment never to be satisfied,—and envying the more fortunate Condition of those few in Comparison, who, being placed above Want, hold some Share in the Conveniencies of Life. And even those they envy on that Account, how far are they from a State of perpetual Enjoyment ? They can taste the Pleasures of Life but sparingly, and on Occasion. Their Situation, and consequent Engagements, make it impossible they should live a Life of Pleasure,—and indeed, on many Accounts, unfit they should do so. Nay, those of the highest Rank, who are thought to have the World at Command, often miss those Enjoyments they are most fond of. If irregular in their Pursuits, they hurt themselves, and destroy the very Plea-

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tures they aim at. If they devote themselves too much to them, they sink beneath their Station, and betray their own Dignity. So that, according to this Representation, much of Pleasure is impossible to be had by most, and unfit to be enjoyed by any.

If we pass on from Enjoyments of the animal Kind, to those which may be termed rational, we should observe, that these may be reduced to Two Classes; *viz.* such as arise from Improvements, either in Knowledge or in Virtue.

In reference to the former, whatever be the natural Capacity of Man, Improvement must be the Effect of Education and Study. Science is the Fruit of Leisure, and of Freedom from the Anxieties of lower Life. Persons, who are obliged to lay out all their Time in procuring the bare Necessaries of their Being, which is the Condition of the far greatest Part of our Race, can have none to bestow on the Pursuits of Learning, however valuable the thing itself might prove. And, what is still worse, their very Capacities themselves, by Want of Education and Exercise, are in Time so narrowed, that they become incapable of receiving Pleasure from the Improvements of others; I mean, of understanding

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standing what these Improvements are, and of perceiving, by any kind of Explication, the very Truths which others have discovered for them. Science therefore is no Part of their Province.

But, shall we say the same of Virtue, and of the Pleasures which arise from Virtue?—Not in a like Manner, and to the same Degree. Here every Man hath some truly valuable Advantages ; and such as, improved so far as each Man is capable of improving them, would administer Cause of high Satisfaction, and make great amends for several other Defects in his Condition. There is a proper Foundation for Virtue laid in our very Nature. I mean, not only, that the Rules of it are simply discoverable, from considering the several Relations of Things (to do this, being the Effect of Learning and Study, cannot be expected from the generality of Mankind) but,---that there are general Principles implanted in us, which urge us on to what is right, without the tedious Methods of Discourse and Reasoning. From pursuing these Principles, we receive a Satisfaction ; and by deviating from them, we expose ourselves to Shame, to Anxiety, and to Horror. Certain Degrees of Virtue, therefore, are attainable

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even in the lowest State : And the Kindness of Providence is not a little seen in this, that those Things, which are of the highest Importance to Man, are proportionably within his Power. But after all, how far doth Man in fact proceed in this great Affair ? I speak not here of the few truly wise and philosophical, but of the Bulk of Mankind. Are they found to build much on this excellent Foundation, which Nature itself hath laid within them ? So far from it, that few Instances are to be met with of any thing considerable this Way. The very best Performances are short and imperfect, and mixt with a great Variety of Miscarriages. So that when a Man comes to reflect on his moral Conduct, though he cannot but be pleased with having done something virtuous, if he hath done it, yet this Pleasure must be greatly qualified, by considering how much he hath fallen short of what might have been done even in this Instance,—and much more so, by considering in how many other Points he may have failed entirely. He cannot therefore receive any great Comfort from reflecting on his moral Condition, even in the best View he is able to take of it, unless he considers it as a Step made
towards

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towards that Perfection, which is to be begun and carried on here, but to be completed hereafter in another better State of Things. Then indeed a solid Pleasure will arise, and such a one, as will supply the Room of every other Satisfaction, which our Condition in Life may remove from us. Then Life may, upon the whole, become happy to us, and richly worth the having. But, without such a Prospect as this, I do apprehend, little Pleasure can arise from such a Survey of a Man's Self, as will furnish out more Instances, which deserve some sort of Censure, than any Degree of Self-Appause.

Hitherto we have considered the Enjoyments Man is capable of, under the several Heads of Animal and Rational. There are some others, not so properly reducible to either of those Heads, and which I shall therefore just mention by themselves. Such are the Pleasures arising from the Possession of Wealth, of Power, of Dignity, of Fame; those with which we are supplied by Fancy and Imagination; and (what may be thought more vulgar) by Diversion and Amusement. Others of a like kind might be added, if needful. But this may be observed concerning most of them, that they come within the

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Reach of those few only, who are possessed of the Conveniencies and Elegancies of Life; and therefore can make no Part of that Happiness, which falls to the Share of the Bulk of Mankind. And even with regard to those who possess them, the Pleasure they give varies much, in proportion to Men's several Tastes, some having a greater Enjoyment than others, from possessing the very same Objects. So that it is no easy Matter to form a Notion concerning the real Happiness of any one, from merely considering the external Advantages of his Condition. This only can be said (and our own Experience will confirm the Assertion) that our present Frame is such, as renders most of our Pleasures unsatisfactory. We are quickly weary of them. We then search after others, which, in the Event, equally disappoint us: And so, upon the whole, we enjoy much the same, whether we succeed in our Pursuits or not.

But, if this View of human Life, taken on its best Side, be so little to its Advantage, what shall we say when we come to examine the Distresses and Sufferings Men are exposed to, and which every one labours under, in a greater or less Degree? A sacred Writer says, *Man is born to Trouble* [Job v. 7.]

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He is not only *exposed* to it from the first Moment of his Birth to his Dissolution, but every Day, even the happiest, *actually* brings with it some Evil. Hunger and Thirst (which are the Two principal Appetites implanted in us, for the Preservation of our animal Being) are uneasy Sensations ; but such as every one feels, and must feel, in order to have the consequent Pleasure of gratifying them. Even Desire itself, of whatever kind it be (without which, from the very Nature of the Thing, there can ordinarily be no Enjoyment) is ever accompanied with some Degree of Pain : And the Enjoyment arising from having such a Desire answered, is often little more than a short Relief from this Pain. The great *English* Philosopher hath maintained, that “ the human Will is ever determined by Uneasiness.*”

If this be true, how frequent must the Returns of Uneasiness be to every one, since he cannot exert so much as One, even the most trifling Act of his Will, in order to Action, without somewhat of a preceding Pain. But, if this should be thought to carry the Matter somewhat too far (as perhaps it may) yet so much at least must be allowed, that human

Will

* See Mr. *Locke's* Essay, lib. ii. chap. 2. §. 31.

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Will is oftener determined by Uneasiness, than by any other Cause.

These Reflections are general, and concern every Condition of Man, through every Stage of his present Being. But, if they should be thought of lesser Moment, as carrying with them, rather some little Abatements of his Happiness, than any considerable Degree of Unhappiness, we may go on, and consider Articles of higher Importance; and such as must be allowed by every one, at the first Mention, to be truly affecting. Thus, an unhappy Constitution of Body may not only hinder our taking any Pleasure in the several Advantages we are possessed of, but prove the Source of great and many, and perhaps uninterrupted Pains.—Occasional Diseases (to which the Niceness of the human Frame must ever expose it) may, and do frequently, create not only temporary, but such lasting Disorders both of Body and Mind, as make Life itself a Burthen.—The Difficulties Men must encounter, whether in gaining the Advantages of Life, or securing them when obtained;—the Cares necessary to form Projects;—the Labour of bringing them into Execution;—the Sollicitude for the Event;—the Apprehensions of Disappointment

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pointment from the Follies of some, and the Dishonesty or Malice of others ;—the Sense that we have a very uncertain Tenure of these things, after we succeed to the Possession of them ;—the Regret for their Loss, when we come to lose them ;—the Hardships we are hence reduced to, by falling into a Condition we are unqualified to bear ;—the growing Infirmities of Age, aggravated by the Indifference of former Friends, and perhaps the ill Offices of Enemies ;—the ill Conduct, or the Misfortunes, or the Loss, of those who are most nearly related to us ;—any of these will, in their proportion, affect, or weigh down the Mind ; and much more so, if they shall be found (as they are too frequently) to succeed one another in Train. Under such a View, how can we pronounce Man's Condition happy, unless at the same time we suppose him possessed of some secret Support, which can give Vigour to his Spirits, and enable him to bear more than mere human Reason, or mere human Strength, can do.

What I have said hitherto, concerns the State of those chiefly, who are placed in the middle Life. But, if we descend lower, and consider the Condition of the Multitude, we shall

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shall find their Case much more deplorable. These likewise are exposed to many of the Evils before-mentioned,—but with this Difference, that whenever they happen, they find them in a Condition that deprives them of those Helps, which might serve to remove their Calamities, or to abate them. What is a poor distressed Creature capable of doing towards his own Relief, when oppressed with Sickness, or labouring under such bodily Hurts, as his very Situation in Life must especially expose him to ;—when, in his better Days of Health and Vigour, he could just procure the Necessaries of his Being, unable to lay in any Provision against future evil Accidents? In such a Case being placed out of the Way of Remedies, and dependent on others for a poor Subsistence, who are scarce able to provide it for themselves, he must either perish miserably, or (which is worse) languish out a Life more miserably. Or, if this should be thought a Case, which doth not happen frequently, and therefore what ought not to be insisted on too strongly ;—yet, are not helpless Creatures of this kind perpetually exposed to Oppression and Insults, from those of higher Condition? who, having no Sense of what others suffer, trifle with the

Miseries

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Miseries of their Inferiors. Such is often the Case of the lower Rank, in formed Societies, even where some Degree of Politeness prevails: It is much worse where Men are illiterate, rude and barbarous;—where One great Tyrant, having an absolute Power, subjects all to his Caprice; and where the great Slaves, wretched as they are themselves, contribute their Share to render the lesser Slaves more wretched. Nor shall we find Matters at all better, where there is either no Government at all, or where Men are formed into little Clans, subsisting under imperfect Regulations. Here some Visionaries may dream of I know not what happy Fruits of Liberty. And yet, when it comes to be examined into, it will appear, that the poor Creatures, by escaping One great Tyrant, are only the more exposed to Many. They are not only open to the Insults of each of their own Clan, who thinks he hath a Right to do whatever he is capable of doing, without sufficient Controul,—but to the Inroads of every neighbouring Power, which seldom fails of taking all the Advantages it can, against those who are weaker than themselves. And though they cannot but feel their own Distresses most sensibly, yet, as often as they
get

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get the better, shew no Degree of Compassion to their more distressed, more miserable Neighbours.

If to what hath been said, we add the Devastations of War (in which often both the contending Parties do suffer almost equally);----the Rage of Pestilence;----the Tortures of Famine;---the Inclemency of Seasons, with many other extensive Calamities, which ruin or destroy whole Nations at once;---when we consider, that these have happened frequently, and may happen at any Time;---we shall be tempted to conclude, without carrying our Enquiries any farther, that the Sufferings of Mankind in general, are much greater than their Enjoyments.

And yet, bad as this View is, there are other Reflections behind, which must shew the Case under greater Aggravations.

I know it is sometimes said, in Abatement of the Argument I am upon, that the Sufferings of the Generality of Mankind are only occasional and short; whereas, for the little they suffer so seldom, they have almost every one the Necessaries of Life; most hold some of its Conveniencies, which being used discretely, must produce a considerable Share of Happiness: And these they possess through
the

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the greatest Part of Life, with a reasonable Proportion of Health and Vigour : Infomuch, that for a few Days of Sicknefs, or Pain, or Trouble, they enjoy whole Years of Satisfaction. I have put the Matter strong : But then I must observe, that Reasonings of this kind are taken from Observations made on the more fortunate Part of Mankind. Under a mild Government, and the Administration of good Laws ; in a Climate not unfavourable ; where Commerce is carried on, and the useful Arts of Life cultivated, there may be fewer Instances of Distress, than we must expect to meet with in other Places. It is therefore a wrong Way of computing, to estimate the general State of Mankind, in all Countries, and through all Ages, from what we have Opportunity of observing in our own Times, and in our own Country ; though even here, there may perhaps be more Distress amongst those of the lower Rank, than every one is willing to allow of. The right Way of determining truly upon the Point, must be to consider, how few enjoy the great Advantages which we are blessed with ; how many others have, or do even now suffer, from the Poverty of their Soil ; ---from Ignorance of Arts ; ---the Want of a tolerable Encouragement
for

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for Arts ;——the Unwholsomness of Air ;——the Severity of Climate ;——the Tyranny of arbitrary Governments ;——and the worse Cruelties exercised amongst those, who are subject to none, or an imperfect Government ;——how much Persons, under these Circumstances, are more exposed to tormenting Accidents than others are ;——and how much less they hold of the proper Reliefs and Abatements of these Accidents. If these things are all laid together, it cannot I believe be said, that the Distresses of the Generality of Mankind are merely occasional or slight ;——many of the Hardships just mentioned, being of a lasting kind, and many likewise to the highest Degree affecting.

It will conduce to our Purpose, to remark farther, that Pain (by which I do here understand any disagreeable Perception) affects us in an higher Degree than Pleasure does ; so that a comparatively short Suffering under the one, may over-balance a long Enjoyment of the other. For this I must appeal to the Experience of Mankind, and demand, what thinking Man would chuse to suffer a Fit of some very afflicting Distemper, or the Tortures of a Rack, for the sake of enjoying, even for Months after, any Pleasure this World is capable

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capable of giving him? I believe no thinking Man would do so. And though it is possible, in some Cases, a Man may chuse even Pain; yet when he does, it is not for the sake of Pleasure, but to avoid some future greater Pain. The Comparison therefore, in this Case, is not made between Pain and Pleasure, but between one Pain and another; and, consequently, serves rather to establish than weaken my Assertion. And indeed, amongst other Reasons, this of the prevailing Influence of Pain above worldly Pleasure may be one, why wise Governments enforce their Laws by the Sanction rather of Penalties than of Rewards. The Encouragements of Obedience are chiefly the natural Fruits of good Order, which are enjoyed by all Subjects in common: But that which is employed as the most effectual Way to secure this Obedience, is, the Infliction of Pain, and the Terror of severe Executions. This Method keeps Men in some sort of Order: Whereas Lenity and Remissness, and a Depending on the Influence of Rewards only for the Support of Government and Law, would quickly destroy all Government. This would be the Consequence in the Judgment of any thinking Man. But how can this be accounted for

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otherwise, than from the Principle now laid down, that Pain is more affecting than Pleasure? And, consequently, the frequent Returns of Pain, in the Course of this various Life, may outweigh our Enjoyments, notwithstanding any supposed Difference in their Duration.

Having thus far considered human Life, both in regard to its Enjoyments and its Sufferings, I shall now take a View of certain Principles Man is possessed of, which may serve to heighten or abate either the one or the other. If something to this Purpose hath been occasionally hinted already, I can only say, that it is no easy Matter to treat any Points so distinctly, that one Head shall not run into another.

To the Purpose: The Principles I have chiefly in View are, *Memory* and *Prospect*. Every Man is possessed of these, and doth in fact exercise them more or less; and the Influence they have upon the Mind is proportionably felt by every-one.

By *Memory*, I would be understood to mean the Power of recollecting Events past: And this Power is sometimes exerted without, or even against, the Choice of the Will;—and at others in perfect Subjection to its
Choice:

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Choice: So that, whereas, on certain Occasions, the Remembrance of disagreeable Incidents recurs to us, notwithstanding our utmost Endeavours to forget them, on *others* we revive at pleasure those past Preceptions which once gave us Entertainment.—By the Exercise of this Power in the former Instance, we make past Pains or Sufferings present, and endure them over again in a certain Degree: For Remembrance being the Reviving an Idea we once had, if that Idea be of the painful Kind, it is unavoidable but some Sort of Pain must accompany it.

I know it is sometimes said, that the Remembrance of past Sufferings is sweet: And if there be some Truth in this, yet we should consider in what Cases alone it holds; and then the Observation will confirm my Position. Where the Suffering is over, without any Likelihood of a Return,---and where the having born it discretely is considered as the Means of preventing its Return, and of securing a consequent Over-balance of Happiness, we may justly admit the Observation: But then it is clear, that such a Remembrance is sweet, not barely as the Remembrance of Suffering, but as connected with the Prevention of like Suffering; or rather, as the

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having once born it well hath proved the Means of procuring to us a greater and more substantial Happiness.

It is the present Happiness therefore which pleases us, the Sense of which seems, in some measure, to be heightened by recollecting the painful Steps we once took towards it. But the Memory of Pain, which I am now considering, is the Remembrance of mere Pain. This, from the Nature of the Thing, must be disagreeable: We endeavour to avoid it as much as possibly we can, and yet we cannot always avoid it: It thrusts itself into our Minds upon the Appearance of any Object which was once connected with this Pain: Sometimes it comes in, we know not how; and whilst it continues, puts us in a State not much unlike what we suffered formerly: It spoils our Taste of every present Good, and will not suffer us to enjoy the real Advantages of our Condition. On the other hand, it may be thought, that the Memory of past Pleasure will serve to balance this Evil; and so much the more, as we must experience in ourselves a Power of reviving such Perceptions, when we please. And indeed this would be the Case, if the Remembrance of past Pleasure were near so affecting

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affecting to us as that of Pain. But here we find a Difference. The Recollection of Pleasure once present, but not now in fact enjoyed, is so far from creating a new Pleasure, that it is attended with a sort of Regret for having passed it, and a consequent Desire of enjoying it over again; which Regret is itself a Pain,--and the Desire (as was noted before) accompanied with Pain: And this Pain is often more heightened by the Apprehension that Desires of this kind may never again be gratified.

It is farther observable, in relation to this very Power of recollecting past Entertainments, that we are disposed sometimes to exercise this Power where we know beforehand the Consequence will be grievous.

Thus, in relation to departed Friends, or Persons dear to us: We dwell upon the Remembrance of them, and are fond of reviving the several agreeable Incidents of their former Conversation: Yet, to what doth this often serve, but to heighten our Distress for the Loss of them, and to impress upon our Minds a more heavy and lasting Grief? Inasmuch, that, by I know not what strange kind of Infatuation, we are led to employ a Power, under our own Management, the more feelingly to afflict ourselves.

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Thus much concerning *Memory*. I will now pass on to the next Principle; I mean, *Prospect*; and by this should be understood the Power of Looking-forward, and of discerning the future, certain, or probable, Consequences of Things. By this Power Man is principally distinguished from inferior Beings; in virtue of which, especially when exercised by a lively Imagination, we can anticipate either our Enjoyments or Sufferings; but still with this Difference, that the Feeling of these anticipated Enjoyments is not so lively and vigorous, as the Sense of foreseen Evil. And of this some rational Account may be given from a Position before advanced; *viz.* That Pain affects more than Pleasure; and, consequently, the Apprehension of future Evil will be more interesting than the Foresight of future Good.

From this Power in the human Mind, which we call Prospect, compared with that other we have termed Memory, there result Two Passions of different kinds; I mean, *Hope* and *Fear*. Each of these affects us in a certain Degree, and hath its Influence, not only in producing either Good or Evil, but likewise in heightening or abating the Sense of either. I have said before, Memory is the Power of recollecting past Events, whether

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Good or Bad. Prospect is a like Foresight of either. The Remembrance of Good enjoyed, compared with a Probability of a like Good to come again, begets Hope; and a Remembrance of Evil suffered, with a Likelihood, and sometimes a mere Possibility, of a Repetition of this Evil, will produce Fear; and each of these being strong Passions, will proportionably either raise or dispirit us.

Thus, in reference to the former, Hope (which I do here consider only as it concerns the present Life): The Remembrance that we have formerly got the better of our Distresses,---a Belief that we may do so again,---with a reasonable Prospect that we shall do so, cannot but afford some Comfort, and give us new Spirits; and seems to be One Provision, which the All-kind Governor of the World hath made to support us in our present Condition. This will be still the stronger, if the Prospect shall carry with it likewise some valuable positive Good to be enjoyed hereafter. But yet, this Abatement of Confidence will ever accompany such Prospects; *viz.* That we have frequently been disappointed, and that we may likewise be again disappointed: And a Solicitude about the Event will naturally be raised in proportion to the Importance of the Thing wished for.

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So again, on the other hand, with regard to Fear: This arises from Evil once felt, and a Foresight of a like Evil to come. The Recollection of our past Feeling is itself painful: A Prospect of the like must be more so; and this in proportion to the Probability we have, that it may or will happen again. And when we consider how many Accidents there are in Life unfavourable,---how much Self-interest may prevail with some to interfere with our particular Interest,---and how far Malice may push on others to help forward our Ruin, we have too just Occasions to fear the worst. So that, in such a View, it may be questionable, whether the Apprehensions of approaching bad Fortune may not prove more than sufficient to render even our present Enjoyments useless.

There is still behind a Reflection of no ordinary Moment: For, in the Beginning of this Discourse, when I proposed to consider the Happiness or Unhappiness of Life, I proceeded on this Supposition; That there is no Hope of a better State of Things to come hereafter. This plainly excludes the Belief of any future Existence; and carries with it a Persuasion, that the whole Being of Man is utterly extinguished by Death. But

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is not the very Thought of this of itself terrible? Is not the Desire of Being natural to us? ---- So natural, that Men would chuse Life, with many and considerable Evils attending it, rather than take Refuge in that Death, which, though it should put an End to their Calamities, is supposed, at the same time, to extinguish their Being?

The Case is much otherwise in regard to Brutes,---which having no distant Prospects, are free from either Hope or Fear of any thing, unless placed just before them. These endeavour to avoid Pain, and the immediate Causes of Pain, but betray no Apprehensions of Death. To them such a Destruction only puts an End to their Enjoyments or Sufferings: But in regard to Man, whose Views are so much larger, and whose Desires, in consequence, so much more extensive, Death must be considered as a Boundary interposed to all their Views, and One absolute Disappointment of their Desires.

It will be in vain to alledge here, that if Death shall extinguish our Being, it must destroy our Sense of every thing: And if nothing is to be felt hereafter, then all Misery must cease: And where no Misery can be apprehended, there can be no Object of Fear.

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Fear. Such Reasonings contradict Fact; and would, by a Subtlety, impose on us a Belief contrary to our own Feeling. I have said, there is implanted, in human Nature, a Principle, which not only enables Man, but likewise urges him to look forward. This aids and strengthens another natural Principle; *viz.* The Desire of perpetual Existence; without which Existence this Prospect will be bounded, and the Desires consequent upon such a Prospect defeated. I would beg to know, therefore, whether the Apprehension of something so directly contrary to both these natural Principles, can be other than affecting? It is true, if we are to go entirely out of Being when this hath once happened, we can suffer nothing more; and, having lost all Sense, shall be unconscious even of the Loss. But what then? Doth a Reflection of this kind prove, that the present Apprehension of such an Event is no present Evil? Or, that it neither doth, nor possibly can, give us any Concern? This surely cannot be affirmed by any-one, who hath not learnt to refine beyond all Reason, and to philosophise against all Sense.

I may assume therefore the Point before me as a certain Truth; *viz.* That the Thought
of

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of an utter Extinction of Being must create Terror in us as often as that Thought recurs. And will there not be frequent Occasions given to revive this Apprehension in a Person habitually possessed of it? Even the very Good he enjoys, the more he likes it, will be the more apt to suggest to him, that he must shortly part with it for ever, and this without the least Hope, or supposed Possibility, of Compensation in any other Way. And must not such a Thought sink his Mind, and pall his Taste, and flatten every Enjoyment? Or, indeed, can he, with such a Scene of Darkness before him, have the Heart to make use of his very Advantages?—If, on the other hand, his Circumstances in Life be unfavourable, the Case will be somewhat altered: For, on that Supposition, Death will put an End to all his Calamities; and the very Prospect of having his Miseries concluded may be thought a Good. But will not this Death, at the same time, put an End to every better View,---disappoint every natural Desire,---even that strong Desire of Existence, which every-one has, and which every-one acts in pursuit of, whilst his Reason remains, or is not quite overborn? Notwithstanding therefore what he feels at present from the

Calamities

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Calamities he labours under, this Thought will be so far from relieving, that it will add to his Calamity ; because it not only deprives him of every Hope which might abate his Sense of it, but likewise brings with it an additional Terror of its own. Such a Person must consider himself as most miserable both in Life and Death.

The Subject before me, so far as I have considered it hitherto, hath opened to us a most uncomfortable View of our Condition. Let us now turn our Thoughts a little, and see how Matters will stand on a contrary Supposition. Let us therefore put the Case of a Man strongly possessed with the Hope of a future Life : Let us suppose him to cherish this Hope,---to recur to it on all proper Occasions, and to act reasonably under the Sense of it. What then may we presume the Consequence ? ---I think we may affirm with great Assurance, his Enjoyments will be improved,---his Sufferings will be abated,---and those several Principles which influence either the one or the other, being rightly turned, will serve to render his Condition still better.

I do not say, that the Hope of a future Life will procure to us those temporal Advantages to which we were not born, and which

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which we have no Opportunities of acquiring ; nor do I affirm, that it will prevent such Calamities as the very Condition of our Being subjects us to ;---but this I do and will affirm, that, upon the present Supposition, we shall have a better Taste of our Enjoyments ; we shall learn Contentment in the Portion allotted us ; and that Contentment will produce a more real, though less shewy, Pleasure than the highest Condition in Life can procure to us. I do not say, it will make Men learned, or, by opening their Minds, enable them to enjoy speculative Truths :---But then, it will do something greater by far : This single Truth, in itself more interesting than any other Truth can be, will be a perpetual Source of Pleasure ; the Contemplation of it will never tire us ; and if the common Duties of Life shall prevent our keeping it always in actual View, yet we shall ever return to it with Delight.

In regard to the Pleasures of Virtue, the Advantage it carries with it is still more important : For this Hope itself is a great Sanction of the Laws of Virtue, without which (considering the Condition of Mankind) it is impossible to support Virtue. And though the very best Men are subject to great Imperfections,

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fections, the Sense of which must abate much of that Pleasure, which might otherwise arise from the Consciousness of clear Integrity, yet here the Hope of something better hereafter will relieve us. Under this we shall consider Life as only the First Step and Entrance upon Immortality, during which we are to discipline, and gradually improve, ourselves in every moral Excellence;---but must expect the Completion in another State to come. This noble Scene the Hope before us will present,---qualified indeed with some kind of Doubt, which nothing but express Revelation can clear off: Yet still, it may, and hath, in fact, served, with Numbers of Mankind, to raise them above themselves, and to make them anticipate that Happiness they hoped for.

Thus far concerning the Influence of this excellent Principle on the Enjoyments of Life. If we now turn ourselves to the darker Side of human Condition, and consider the Distresses Men are exposed to, we shall find its Effect considerable: In general it suggests to them Patience, and the Expectation of better Events: For this Hope being ever connected with the Belief of Divine Providence, he, who is possessed of it, will consider himself

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self as the perpetual Subject of God's Care. He will reckon therefore upon the Calamities he may endure as Means towards some greater and better End ; which, being once answered, the Calamities may cease of course: And, during such Trial, he will not only comfort himself with this Prospect of Relief, to be afforded when God sees fit, but, looking beyond this Life, enjoy before-hand a better : He will imagine (and, in this Case, a general Imagination cannot deceive him) ; he will, I say, imagine Rewards proportionable to his present Distresses ; ---all Pains removed, ---all Wants supplied, ---and all Desires gratified. In this Thought will every Distress be lost.

Once more : The Hope I have been considering will govern likewise those Principles in human Nature, which conduce to heighten or abate our present Enjoyments or Sufferings: For it will either turn them the right Way, and make them serve even for its own Confirmation, ---or it will swallow them up, as giving us scarce Room to attend to either. Thus our Memory of past good Actions will give us a greater Courage and Confidence ; the Remembrance of past Enjoyments, if pursued regularly, will be considered as the

Earnest

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Earnest of future ;—and of past Sufferings, as
 a sort of Title to a greater Proportion of Happi-
 ness to come : But, in regard to Prospect, the
 View of approaching Evil will conduce to
 wean our Affections from the World, and to
 fix them on that better State of Things we
 hope for ; and the Foresight of coming Ad-
 vantage, will kindle in us the quickest Sense
 of Gratitude to that Being, who, by some
 Taste of Good even in this Life, foreshews
 how much greater he intends us hereafter.
 Beyond this (what is still of higher Conse-
 quence), the Hope of a future Life will then
 aid us most, when our Condition shall need
 it most ; I mean, upon the near Approach of
 Death. At such a Season, what must be the
 Sentiments of the Unbelieving, or even of
 the Doubtful,---with a Scene of Darkneſs be-
 fore them, in which, because they see nothing,
 they naturally fear every thing ? The Love of
 Life makes them part from it with infinite
 Regret, whilst they expect not merely to
 change their Place, but to lose their very Be-
 ing ; and the Horror, which this Sentiment
 must produce, is inexpressible.

From hence may we conclude what must
 be the contrary State of a Person possessed
 with Hope : He will not only support him-
 self

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self under the Pains of Sickneſs,—the Sinking of his Spirits, and the Agonies of his laſt Struggle,—but even triumph over all theſe Difficulties : He muſt long for that Diſſolution, which ſhall put him into the immediate Poſſeſſion of all he could wiſh or hope for : So important, ſo neceſſary, a Principle is the Belief of a better State, both to give Worth to our Enjoyments, and to ſupport us under our Afflictions !

But here a Difficulty may be ſtarted. The Argument before us represents the Hope of a better State hereafter, as neceſſary to carry Men through Life, and to ſupport them under the Unhappineſs of their Condition. It might therefore be expected, that the Grounds of ſuch a Hope ſhould be proportionably clear, that the Reaſons on which this Point may be eſtabliſhed, ſo neceſſary to the Good of all, ſhould be open to the Apprehenſions of all ; otherwiſe the Conſtitution of Things may be thought hard, and the Equity of Divine Providence be called in queſtion : And yet, when we come to examine the Matter, it will appear, that the rational Arguments for a future State, however concluſive, are abſtruſe. I do not ſay, that in Kind they are ſo ſubtle, as to give any juſt Cauſe of Doubt to the

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Learned ; but only, that as they are built on a long Train of Reasoning, which the Multitude have no Leisure to pursue, or Capacities to apprehend, Considerations of such a sort can have no Effect on them ; and, consequently, upon this Supposition, the State of the Generality of Mankind is not barely unhappy, but most deplorably, and without any sort of Remedy, miserable.

This would represent the Case as sad indeed : But doth this Objection shew, that the Bulk of Mankind neither have, nor can have, any Hope of a better State hereafter ? I do not speak of demonstrative Evidence, such as philosophical Minds may have (of this perhaps they are incapable), but I here speak of Hope ; which Hope may be produced in different Minds by different Causes ; and those Causes may have Weight with some Persons, which are entirely overlooked by others. In fact, the Hope of such a future State hath prevailed, and been entertained by the Generality of Mankind through all Ages ; concerning which State, if they differed from one another, and all of them erred as to particular Accounts, yet the general Hope subsisting, proved their great Support under the Calamities of Life. I do not maintain (nor

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is it needful to be maintained for the Purpose of my present Argument), that Men in general have had such a distinct and full View of the other World, as could discover to them the particular Objects to be there enjoyed, and the Manner in which the happy Possessors shall be employed about them. Such a Knowledge is more than is imparted to us even under the Gospel ; which, though it confirms our Belief as to the general, and improves our Hope into Certainty, yet leaves us still in the Dark as to the Particulars of a future State. Room therefore, in such a Case, there must be for Imagination to display itself : And when Fancy is employed without the Assistance of Judgment, it is no Wonder if somewhat extravagant should be produced. Hence those odd Accounts concerning the particular State of Things after Death : Yet odd, and even groundless, as they may now be thought, Mens entertaining such Accounts is an Evidence, not only of the general Hope of a better Life, but likewise of the strong Influence of this Hope.

If it be still demanded, whence such a Hope could arise amongst the lower Sort, who could not reason themselves into it ? we may assign several Causes ; each of which by

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itself may account for this Appearance ; and all of them concurring, may give as much Vigour to the Hope produced, as even Demonstration itself could do. Thus it might perhaps be derived by Tradition from the First Pair ; who, knowing the great Importance of this Hope, might take particular Care to cultivate it in their Children, and to direct the Propagation of it through all Ages : It might be taught by those, who were able to establish it on rational Principles, in different Times, and different Places ; and the good-natured Learners, rejoicing in so comfortable a Principle, might take Pleasure in spreading it. The Effect of the Tradition, or of the Teaching now mentioned, would be much assisted by Men's own natural Wishes : For, if they dread even the Thought of an utter Extinction of their Being, they must proportionably wish its Continuance, together with such agreeable Perceptions as shall render this Being pleasant : Or, if we should throw out of our Account both the Tradition and Instruction before suggested, yet, as Men gradually come to hope what they strongly wish, this itself might create that Hope ; and this being common to all Mankind, it is no Wonder if the Hope produced

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duced by it should be general. Add to this, that there is probably a Kind of Instinct in the human Mind urging him to embrace this Principle; and that Providence hath made this Provision to enable Men to support themselves in their present Condition. Nor will it be any Objection against this, that some few Persons may possibly be found who are destitute of this Hope. Such extraordinary Exceptions do by no means destroy a general Rule; nor will a few Instances suffice to contradict what, in a popular Sense of the Word, we term *Universal*. The like may be observed in many other Cases where Instinct is confessed; and a rational Account might be given of such Exceptions, were it necessary.

Thus far have we seen from what Causes the general Hope of a better State hereafter may proceed: And a Hope, thus founded (which we may likewise call, in some respects, *Persuasion*), will not cease to be truly valuable, merely because it comes not up to that kind of *Assurance*, which is the Effect only of *Demonstration*. If Men assent to a Point, and act under a Sense of it, it is of little Consequence how that Assent was produced. The Thing admitted may be true, even though we should suppose the Motives

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of Belief in their own Nature insufficient ; and Demonstration itself doth not create the Truth, but only prove it. If any-one therefore shall endeavour to detract from the Merit of that Hope, which the lower Part of Mankind are possessed of, and say, that being the Effect of Prepossession, or Inclination, rather than Reason, it is consequently a contemptible Prejudice,—he ought to be reminded, that Reason is not the only Way whereby a Sense of Truth is capable of being produced in us. The most rational Men often jump into Conclusions they know not how ; the Certainty of which is afterward evinced by a Train of Reasoning : And perhaps some of the noblest Discoveries have owed their Birth to somewhat of this Kind.

But whatever should be the Case of the Learned and Acute,—as the Bulk of Mankind are incapable of making their Way to Truth by Argument and long Deduction, Providence hath, in the more important Instances, relieved them ;—and either by such an Impress on the Mind as we term Instinct, —or by Suggestions arising from ordinary Events, hath as it were created in them Sentiments they could not otherwise have produced in themselves. A poor, illiterate,
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half-thinking Creature, in virtue of a kind of natural Affection, cherishes his Children ; —or, in consequence of a like Propension towards the human Race (which we call Benevolence), is led to do all the Offices of Humanity and Tenderneſs to others he hath Opportunity of doing. Shall we ſay, ſuch a Conduct is blind, irrational, and void of Merit, merely becauſe the poor Creature is incapable of deducing his Obligations, in a Courſe of Reaſoning, from the Natures and Relations of Things? I truſt not. In this Caſe, he follows a Guide, I may ſay, more unerring than human Reaſon is; or, if this ſhould not readily be allowed me, he follows the beſt Guide he has; and, in doing ſo, muſt be excuſable at leaſt in the Eye of All-perfect Reaſon.

I ſhall make One Reflection on the main Doctrine hitherto inſiſted on : Since the Hope of a better Life to come hereafter is ſo neceſſary to ſupport us under preſent Calamities, how great is the Malevolence of thoſe Perſons who endeavour either to overthrow or weaken it? In regard to themſelves, it argues extreme Folly; becauſe it robs them of that which is more valuable than any thing elſe in Life, and by which alone any thing elſe is valuable. But we need be leſs concerned at

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the Prejudice this does to their own Interest ; which they alone feel, and deserve to feel, since they perversely cause it : If they would keep their Thoughts secret, the Mischief would be personal, and the general Interest would escape ;---but when they loudly proclaim their Disbelief,---argue for it (such kind of Arguing as it is),--are instant and pressing, ---and searching after Opportunities to stagger the Faith of others, in a Matter of all the most interesting, to what can we ascribe it, but to a Principle of absolute Malice?---To that Principle which prevails in the *evil* Being, a Desire of making others as wretched as themselves : For had they any real Cause of Doubt upon the Point (which I will affirm they cannot have),---or could they even demonstrate the Doctrine we maintain to be wrong, yet what good-natured End can they propose by infusing these Doubts, or publishing this Demonstration ?----Why, they will tell you, the Freeing Men from Superstition. If you go on, and ask, What they mean by Superstition ? their Answer will not be quite so clear ; only, it is something, which not having themselves, they care not any-one else should have ; But, in the Name of common Sense, is the avoiding what they mean by Superstition (if they have really any Meaning)

ing) a sufficient Inducement to them to draw so much Misery on the World, as the Disbelief of this most comfortable Doctrine must carry with it? Is the very Superstition (to which they pretend so violent an Antipathy) an Evil,---greater than all other Evils,---even those for which the Hope of a better State is a proper Remedy? If it be, then indeed we can have nothing to say: But if, supposing this Hope to be superstitious, it be no Evil; if it be no Parent of Evil; if it be not only comfortable in itself, but the proper Support under all present Evils; then, I think, the common Interests of Mankind (had they any Regard to them) should produce a different Conduct,---and make them at least cautious what Liberties they took on this Subject.

In this Expostulation, I have set the Matter much lower than the thing itself deserves: For the Hope I have been treating of is by no means a profitable *Error*, but, as to the Matter of it, an useful and necessary Truth. For this there are not wanting the strongest Arguments in point of Reason; and these farther confirmed by the infallible Evidence of Revelation. What hath hitherto been advanced is a Step this Way; and when the Whole of our Apostle's Argument is considered, we shall need no more.

S E R M O N XIII.

The Condition of Mankind in general
unhappy, without the Belief of a
future State.

P A R T II.

I COR. XV. 19.

*If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ,
we are of all Men most miserable.*

THE most important Questions that
can employ the Mind of Man, re-
late to the Continuance or Extinction
of his Being; and the Happiness or Misery
it is capable of whilst that Being subsists.
This must arise from the natural Desire of
perpetual Existence which we feel within
ourselves,—a like Desire of agreeable Per-
ceptions, and a proportionable Aversion to
disagree-

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disagreeable. In consequence of this, and led perhaps by a kind of Instinct besides, the Generality of Men have entertained a very strong Hope, that *all* doth not end with this Life; — that the thinking and perceptive Part of us shall survive the Ruins of the Body; — and, passing into another World, shall there enjoy an Happiness, which the Circumstances of this Life prevented.

Yet, though this Hope hath generally prevailed, there have not been wanting *some*, in most Ages, who have disputed this Point: And, amongst others, there were some even of the *Corinthian* Converts tainted with this Error. Thus, as *St. Paul* demands in the 12th Verse of this Chapter; *How say some among you, There is no Resurrection of the Dead.*

The Persons here alluded to were some new Converts, made probably from the Sect of the *Sadducees*, or perhaps from such of the Gentile Philosophers as disbelieved a future State. These may be supposed to have rejected the Doctrine of a Resurrection upon that very Principle; and, consequently, our Apostle's Way of arguing against them was entirely rational: *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.*

The

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The Argument here alledged, concludes directly for the Certainty of a future State: And as it is an Argument not only of great Weight in itself, but farther recommended to our Consideration by the Authority of the great and inspired Person who used it, any Pains taken to explain it will not be thought improper.

To this purpose we may observe, that our Apostle's Reasoning carries in it these Two Positions:

- I. That without the Hope of a better State to come hereafter, the Condition of Mankind in general must, upon a just Ballance of Things, be esteemed unhappy.
 - II. That, upon a like Supposition, the Condition of those particularly intended by the Apostle, must be much worse, and more happy, than that of other Men. From whence our Apostle would be understood to infer,
 - III. That therefore there must be a better State of Things to come hereafter.
- Having cleared these Points, it will be proper, in the Last place, to make a Reflection or Two on the Whole.

I have,

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I have, in a former Discourse, entered upon this Subject, and considered the First Position distinctly : I shall now, in Pursuit of our Apostle's Argument, go on, and explain that other Position expressly delivered in the Text ; viz. If we have no Hope of a better State to come, *we* (whoever the Persons are intended by that Term) are much more unhappy than other Men.

Who these Persons are, hath proved Matter of Dispute ; and Writers have seemed at least to differ from one another. Yet it will appear in this, as well as many other Cases, that each Side hath had somewhat of Truth : Each Explication may be admitted in a proper Sense ; and all of them put together, will comprehend the whole Force of our Apostle's Position.

Now, in the First Sense (which seems principally to be intended here), the Term [*WE*] refers to the Apostles themselves, and the First Propagators of the Christian Doctrine. The Persons here spoken of, who are said to be *of all Men most miserable*, seem to be the same with those before spoken of in the 15th Verse, where it is said, *We are found false Witnesses of God, because we have testified*
of

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of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the Dead rise not :

—The same with those referred to in the 14th Verse; *If Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain :*—The same again with those intended in the 11th Verse; *Whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed.* It seems, I say, pretty clear, that of these First Preachers of the Christian Faith our Apostle designed principally to be understood, when, in the Prosecution of his Argument, he affirmed, that without a farther Hope in Christ than this World could justify, they must be *of all Men most miserable.* The Term used, and the Manner of his Proceeding, seem to require this; and the State and Condition of those Persons made, what he affirmed, to them more especially applicable.

Concerning the State of these great Men, let us see what our Blessed Lord foretold; who, at the same time he engaged them in this difficult Work, dealt plainly with them, and explained before-hand the Extremities they must be exposed to. They were to *Go and teach all Nations* [Mat. xxviii. 19.] to expose themselves to every Trouble and Hazard, which belongs to such a State of various

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ous and infinite Pilgrimage. In following this Course, little Thanks or Favour could be expected even from those, for whose Service it was more especially undertaken: They were to combat with the Prejudices, and Passions, and Lusts, of Men; — who could not easily give up even an absurd Religion they had been taught to reckon Sacred, — nor govern Passions they had long served, — nor root out those Lusts, in gratifying which they had placed their Supreme Happiness. Armed indeed with the Power of Miracles to evidence their Divine Commission, they might hope for some Success with the better and more teachable Part of Mankind: But these were generally of the lower Sort; Men without Power or Interest; — in some Degree distressed themselves; — and therefore less capable, either of rewarding the Pains, or of procuring the Safety, or of relieving the Distresses, of their Teachers. And in proportion as they should meet with Success amongst the lower Sort, it is natural to suppose the Resentments of the greater would be inflamed; who, zealous in their Superstition, and concerned to maintain their own Authority and Influence, would not fail to oppose the Progress of Christianity by all the Ways.

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Ways of Rigour. Agreeably our Blessed Lord forewarned his Apostles of all this. In express Words it is declared, *He sent them forth as Sheep amongst Wolves* [Mat. x. 16.] ---that the enraged *Jews* should *deliver them up to the Councils, and scourge them in their Synagogues* [ver. 17.] ---- that, amongst the *Gentiles*, they should be *hated of all Men for his Name sake* [ver. 22.] ---that they should be *persecuted from City to City* [Mat. xxiii. 34.] ---in the *World have Tribulation* [John xvi. 33.] ---and that the Passions of their Enemies should be so embittered, as to make them *think they would do God Service by killing them* [John xvi. 2.]

Such was the Prospect which our Blessed Lord set before them: And did not the Events following justify this Representation? Do not the short Accounts we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, as well as several Intimations in the Epistles, all verify these discouraging Predictions? Or, if we go on, and enquire what succeeding ecclesiastical Historians have farther recorded concerning the First Propagators of Christianity, we shall find the Account of their Distresses greatly enlarged; we shall be told, that but One of all the Apostles escaped a violent Death; and even

he, though saved by a Miracle, seemed to have felt worse, and suffered more, than he could have done had Death itself been the Consequence.

The bare Mention of these Things is enough: For surely there needs no Pains to shew, that Persons thus distressed,—persecuted, and cruelly murdered, must have been much more miserable than other Men, who suffer nothing of this; unless we suppose, at the same time, they are kept up by an Hope superior to all these Difficulties.

Beyond this, the Words before us may, without Inconvenience, be referred to Christians in general, both of that Age, and of the Ages immediately succeeding. The same Reasons will, for the most part, equally conclude for them: And though our Apostle should not be supposed to have had them so immediately in his View, yet, as he saw the more general State of Christians interested, we may reasonably presume their distressed Condition was not entirely overlooked by him. Admitting therefore, that the appointed Witnesses of the great Facts recorded in the Gospel were more especially concerned, as being Persons who were called forth, in the most trying Times, to engage with Difficulties and
Dangers;

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Dangers ;---others likewise, whose Circumstances so much resembled theirs, one might think were proportionably intended : Or, if any-one shall still deny, that our Apostle had them at all in View, yet, as the same Reasons by which *St. Paul's* Affirmation concerning the Apostles can be justified, will be found to hold, in a great degree, concerning other Christians of that Age, it is natural to suppose, his Position would be extended to them likewise : And such Arguings, by a Parity of Reason, are allowed in all other Cases.

But is it Fact (may some demand), that the general Condition of the First Christians was calamitous ?---Let those who have Time and Opportunities examine. It will then appear, that as the Christian Name was hated by all the opposing World, so no one could own that Name without incurring Displeasure. Accordingly the Persecutions which arose were not confined to the Preachers of the Gospel : Their Disciples bore their Share likewise ; and no one could embrace this Faith without hazarding his most valuable Interests in Life,---his Fortune, his Liberty, his Safety : Nay, the Rage and Malice of Persecutors was such as made them ingenious in their very Cruelties : They not only exer-

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cised upon these poor innocent Creatures all the Severities which had been used towards the most execrable Criminals, but invented new Methods of Torture, and seemed to take Pleasure in those Barbarities, which human Nature abhors.

I do not say, every Christian was, at all Times, and without Intermission, oppressed in this Manner : On that Foot the Christian Name must quickly have been extinguished by the entire Destruction of its Professors : But this I have Authority to say, that the Aversion to Christians subsisting both amongst *Jews* and *Gentiles*, was not only general, but constant ;---that any little Incident was apt to enflame them ;---that this frequently happened in Fact ;---that this might happen at any time ;---and that, as most of the Christians did, some time or other, feel these Effects most sensibly, so all of them lived constantly under the Apprehensions of them ; and, we know well, that, next to actual Suffering, must be the constant Fear of it.

Nor was this the Case of those only, who lived in the First Age, and during the Apostles Times : It continued much the same for some Ages after. Who hath not heard of the *Ten* dreadful *Persecutions* ? of which
Two

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Two only happened before the Death of *St. John*. These were general, and some of them lasting : And whilst there was some sort of Intermission, the Persecution never ceased entirely : The settled Aversion and Hatred to Christians ever kept up somewhat of that kind ; enough surely to difference their Case from that of other Men ; and to render them more distressed and unhappy, if, expecting nothing better hereafter, they had relied entirely on the Advantages of the present Life.

Thus far, I hope, no great Difficulty can arise, as to the Extent of our Apostle's Position : But perhaps it may be thought a Question not so clear, whether, or how far, it may likewise be extended to the general Condition of Christians through all Ages. As great Disputes have arisen on this Head ;---as the Point before us is of Moment ;---and Mistakes about it may be pernicious, here we should look carefully about us, and tread with Caution.

To this purpose I shall begin with observing, that, in reference to the ordinary Enjoyments or Sufferings of Life, Christians are upon the same Foot with other Men. As a Man is not, in virtue of this Faith, intitled to

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worldly Possessions, (for Dominion is not founded in Grace) so neither doth he, in fact, acquire them on this Foot. And as to ordinary Sufferings, he is equally exposed to them :---His general Frame of Body is the same ; Accidents are alike ; and those Principles in human Nature, which conduce to make a Man happy or otherwise, are equally possessed by him : So that, being thus far on an equal Foot, we are to enquire, whether there be any thing else particular in his Case, which may be supposed to create a Difference.

I must observe farther, that the Position of our Apostle (let it concern whom you please) supposes not only that *no* better State of Things shall be hereafter, but likewise that *no Hope* of such a State subsists. His Words are, *If in this Life only* WE HAVE HOPE *in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* Whilst therefore we are enquiring whether this Position may be extended to the general State of Christians in all Ages, we must suppose, that such Christians likewise are without this Hope ; and, consequently, no Arguments, drawn from the strong and happy Influence of such Hope upon their Minds, can be of any Avail here.

Let

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Let it be observed again, that whilst I am comparing the State of Christians in general with that of other Men, I would be understood to speak, not concerning nominal, but real, Christians. Men may possibly take the Name, and profess the Faith of Christ, who in truth are errant Heathens. These are out of the Question. But, by Christians, I mean those, who, bating this One Article about a future State, embrace the Whole of Christianity; believe its several Truths; make the Precepts of it the Rule of their Lives, which they endeavour to practise, in their utmost Extent, with Constancy; and persevere in this Conduct till Death. All this should be supposed. Nor will it be sufficient to alledge, that a Supposition of this kind carries with it an Absurdity in the Persons we are speaking of: I grant it does: But yet, it is such an Absurdity as some of the *Corinthians* were guilty of, even in the Apostles Times: Of this he endeavoured to make them sensible, by supposing what they contended for; and shewing, that, upon their own Principles, they must unavoidably run into Errors, which they themselves could not but esteem absurd.

Perhaps there may be scarce Occasion to

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say, that, in stating this Matter, I take One thing more for granted ; *viz.* That no extraordinary Interpositions of Providence discover themselves in favour of the sincere Christian ; I mean, to reward his Practice of Virtue, and to bear him up against any Disadvantage it may occasionally bring upon him. A present Distribution of Good and Evil, to reward or punish Men in proportion to their respective Demerits, might go a great Way towards superseding the Necessity of a future ; though, if even that were the Case, there might not be wanting Arguments of another kind to justify our Belief of it. But with these we have nothing to do at present. I am concerned here to explain and enforce what I take to be *St. Paul's* Argument, or what at least seems included in it by a Parity of Reason ; and this, I say, rests on a Supposition, that Providence doth not alter the common Course of Things, in order to reward the Christian : With regard to this, such Persons are upon the same ordinary Foot with other Men.

Having laid down these Restrictions, I am concerned, before I pass on farther to the real Grounds of Difference between the Condition of Christians and of others ;—I am concerned,

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cerned, I say, to obviate a Mistake prejudicial to the Cause of Virtue. For which purpose I must affirm, that there is nothing in the Nature of Virtue, which can be thought the Ground of Unhappiness: In itself it is fitting, proper, reasonable: The Practice of it must be agreeable to the Understanding, and the Reflection on it, when practised, comfortable: In its Consequences, it tends to produce Good both to ourselves and others;----to improve many of the Enjoyments of Life, and to prevent or to abate its Misfortunes. All this must not only be admitted, but contended for. And yet Experience will assure us after all, that Virtue is by no means self-sufficient: The external Advantages it may, in several Cases, tend to procure, and the inward Satisfaction, which must ever follow the sincere Practice of it, cannot of themselves support its Interests; much less can they render our Condition happy amidst a Variety of afflicting Causes almost constantly acting upon us. It is of no Consequence therefore in the present Argument, whether the sincere Practice of Virtue be not, upon the whole, preferable to a vicious Conduct. We may be sure it is; and the viciously abandoned Man is, even in the present

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present Life, more unhappy than the virtuous; each being supposed to entertain no Apprehensions concerning a future; and the several outward Circumstances of their present Being supposed alike. All this, I say, hath no relation to the present Argument. The Enquiry before us is of another kind, and amounts to this; Whether a Christian acting up to his Profession, and unsupported by the Hopes of something better hereafter, doth not labour under some Disadvantages beyond other Men?

In order to determine this Question, it may be of some Consequence to observe, that the Advantage of a strict Pursuit of Virtue, in reference to the Enjoyments of Life, must depend in a great measure on this Point; viz. that Men proceed by one common Rule, and that all others with whom we are concerned to deal, pursue the Dictates of Virtue with the same Strictness and Integrity. On this Supposition, Virtue, to be sure, would have some Rewards of its own of considerable Moment, in regard even to the present Life. But things will appear in a different Light, if it shall happen, that One Side only is bound up by the Rules of it. If some reckon themselves concerned to adhere inviolably

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lably to these Principles, from which no present Advantage, tempting to the contrary, can prevail with them in the least to deviate, —but, at the same time, others, less scrupulous, shall prefer their Interest to Virtue; —it is plain, these different Persons must correspond on a very unequal Foot. In such a Case, he who cares not to be tied up too strictly, or whose Principles may possibly lead him to measure Virtue by Interest, hath manifestly the Advantage of the more rigorous Moralist; since he makes his own Fortune, by unbending a little on a particular Occasion, whilst the inflexibly honest Man is perhaps ruined by his very Honesty.

Certainly this is a Case supposable: If we look about the World, we shall find it a Case which hath happened; and if we consider the Strictness of the Christian Scheme, compared with that looser System of Morals, which the common Reason of Mankind would furnish them with, it is a Case which may happen frequently: For strict Faith is indispensable with that Person, who follows Christ truly; whilst others, who compute the Obligation to Virtue by its Conduciveness to Interest, will by Interest be very apt to understand their own; and, consequently, leav-
ing

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ing the Concerns of their Neighbours out of the Question, will reckon it no unjustifiable Proceeding to promote their own Advantage in every Way they can. It were to be wished indeed there were not too much of this practised by some who call themselves Christians, and who carry a Name they do not deserve. But since it is so; and since no Prudence can perpetually guard us against Persons of this Temper, it is evident, that a good Man is from hence exposed at least to great Inconveniencies; which, if they should happen, may press sorely, and be felt most sensibly. To say here, that a Consciousness of Integrity will make full Amends, is to compliment Virtue out of measure, and at the Expence even of common Sense: For admitting (what is indeed very true), that those Evils affect us less which Virtue accidentally occasioned, than such as were brought on us by our Vices; yet this doth not prove, that such Evils do hereby cease to be Evils at all. Poverty, Contempt, and the Want even of Necessaries, together with those farther Evils, which a reasonable Affluence might either prevent or remove, are not surely Matters indifferent, or such as a Being, possessed as well of an animal as a rational Nature, can disregard,

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gard. To bear them patiently, and to act under them with Decency, is the utmost which can be expected ; and, I believe, more than would be found in any one who had not farther Views, and the Hopes of something better hereafter : So that, in the Case I have now mentioned, the good Christian would really be a Sufferer even by the Practice of Virtue, notwithstanding its own general Tendency and Excellence.

Beside the Disadvantage which may possibly arise to a good Man from an inflexible Adherence to social Virtue, it hath likewise been found, that Difficulties have arisen from the Practice of private Virtue ; I mean, that which principally concerns a Man's own self. Thus strict Temperance, an Abstinence from sensual Pleasure,---a Gravity of Behaviour,---and what some call a forbidding Austerity of Manners, are apt to be disliked by the more Gay and Airy, who think it reproaches their own less-guarded Conduct. The Persons, thus disliked, will probably become the Subject of their Raillery, perhaps of their ruder Jest ; and sometimes, by direct Misrepresentation, at others by a more reserved and cautious Way of insinuating Ill, they may be accused even of the worst Crimes ; and so suffer,

in

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in the Opinion of the World, by the Imputation of Faults they most abhor.

To say (as some Persons may be apt to alledge), that Imputations of this kind ought to be disregarded, because the Picture drawn having no real Resemblance to the Person unjustly accused, he can properly suffer nothing ;—that the Contempt or Aversion expressed on this Occasion, is directed against an imaginary Character ; to which, having no Relation, he ought to have no Concern about it :—To say this, is to alledge something rather pretty, than solid : For, what if the Consequence of such Imputations should affect a Man's Fortune,---his Liberty,---his Life ? Would this philosophical Subtlety repair the Matter, or make him any Amends ? Why then should we suppose, that the Loss of Reputation (which to some is equally dear with Life) can be repaired in this Way ? Or, that it can be Comfort enough to think, that whilst a hateful Character only was aimed at, the whole Weight of Vengeance hath fallen on an innocent Sufferer ? To talk in this Way, is rather to trifle with Mens Calamities, than to relieve them.

To as little purpose will it be to say, that no Man despises or hates Virtue as such ; and that

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that before a good Man can be made the Subject of either, he must be misrepresented; in which Case the Calamities brought upon him, must not be considered as the Effects of Virtue, but the intended Punishments of Vice. Whatever those Mens Intentions are, who are misled by false Characters, is a Matter of small Moment here, whilst the truly virtuous Man is supposed to suffer in earnest, and his Sufferings to be occasioned by a Malice, which his Virtue itself raised. Will any-one affirm, that, in such a Case as this, his Virtue hath not proved a Disadvantage; since the Calamities brought upon him are real and sensible, and what might have been avoided by the Absence, or lower Degree, of the Virtue envied?

Here then have been Cases assigned, in which the good Man, even in more quiet Times, may suffer by being such: From which Sufferings Christians surely are not exempted: They are rather more exposed to them than others, by the Strictness of their Principles, to which, in preparing this Argument, I supposed them to adhere most firmly. And though every good Man doth not often suffer in this Way (for Prudence may sometimes save him), yet is he ever exposed to it:

And

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And the Apprehension of falling some time or other under it, will be the greater from considering, that as Men have more Power to do Mischief than Good, so likewise the Mischief they create by One single Act may extend itself to all our Interests, and affect us through the whole Course of our Lives. Under the Sense of such Evils, created by such Occasions, what can be sufficient to support us? Not the mere Consciousness of Integrity, valuable as it is in itself; for this cannot destroy Sense: Not even the present Protection of Providence; for this governs the World by general Rules, and, in fact, leaves Virtue in many Cases unsupported. What then can support us, but the Hope that things shall not always be carried on in this Way;—that the present Life is only a State of Trial in order to a better; in which probationary State, if we are not wanting to ourselves, we shall lay the Foundation of such moral Perfection, as, being completed hereafter, shall be rewarded with eternal Happiness?

I shall pass from hence to another Argument, which will carry the Matter somewhat farther; because it is drawn (not as the former was, from the accidental Effects of Virtue

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tue on some Occasions, but) from the Consideration of such Duties as perpetually oblige the Christian ; Duties which oblige him as Articles in that System which he embraces ; and which others can think themselves no farther concerned about, than they shall be able to deduce them from those Principles of Reason they are Masters of. Thus, a Christian is obliged not to love the World,---but, in every Way he can, to withdraw from it, and to check his very Desires after it. To this purpose he is obliged to exercise many Instances of Self-denial ; by which I mean, not merely the Crossing his Appetites in Matters directly vicious, but in those likewise, which, considered in themselves, are innocent. Nor is Self-denial all : He must take farther Steps, and, upon many Occasions, practise the very Austerities of Mortification : In the Language of our Saviour, *He must cut off the Right-hand, and pluck out the Right-eye ; and take up the Cross, and follow him.* So far must he be from loving or desiring the World, that he must *set his Affections on the Things above ;* Things, which, upon Supposition he hath no Hope of an Hereafter, he can have no Interest in ; and therefore the very Reflection on them must be tormenting.

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Beside these Duties, there are others in regard to our Neighbour, which the Christian Scheme carries to a greater Height than Philosophy ever did ; the Practice of which being troublesome, will require something more than the bare Consciousness of performing them, to support us. Thus, we are to be not barely innocent, but exemplary ;—to avoid the giving Offence ; and to forbear those Actions (however we may be prompted to them on other accounts) which others, by Misinterpretation, may condemn in us, or apply to wrong Purposes themselves. We are to consult the Interests of others, in many Cases, preferably to our own ; and if public Good can be served by it, we are to *lay down our Lives for the Brethren.*

Whilst we are thus spending ourselves in the Service of others, we are in some respects unprotected ourselves : For, if invaded by an avaricious or ill-tempered Neighbour, we are not to take every Advantage to repel the Invader. Much must be born, and much forgiven ; though from hence it may happen, that the lawless Invader shall take Encouragement to renew his Assaults, and to hurt us more sensibly. Nay, we are not barely to pardon Injuries, but to repay them by Kindnesses ;

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Kindnesses; *Not to render Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing* [1 Pet. iii. 9.]---to love our Enemies,---to bless them that curse us,---to do Good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us [Mat. v. 44.] Are not all these Christian Duties; and are these to be esteemed as nothing? I do not say, that even these are Duties so peculiarly Christian, that no one ever taught them in any Degree before: Most of them at least have been taught, and I believe practised sometimes by *Gentiles*, in a manner, which must render them the Admiration even of Christians. But from what Principles were these Obligations deduced? and by what Motives were they enforced? Were they taught by those who professed to believe nothing of a future State? No:—Persons of that sort generally followed Pleasure as their chiefest Good: The wisest and best amongst them only prescribed Rules by which Pleasure was to be regulated; and inculcated that Discretion, which might lead them to avoid painful and dangerous Excesses;—and sometimes to give up a less Pleasure for the sake of a greater. But doth this come up to any of the Duties I have now mentioned? Who then were

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the Persons who taught them? Were they not such as, being firmly persuaded of a future State, considered them as chiefly relative to such a State? Thus, to withdraw our Minds as much as we can from the World; — to deny ourselves many Enjoyments, in their own Nature, innocent; — to *mortify the Deeds of the Body*; — and to fix our chief Affections on things above, is a Conduct rational, if we suppose another Life; and consider the present as a State of Discipline by which we are to prepare ourselves for something better hereafter. So again; to regard the Interests of others; — to prefer them, in some Cases, to ourselves; — to lay down our very Lives when a public Good may be promoted by it; — to bear Injuries patiently; — to forgive them cordially; — to repay them by kind Offices; — and to love the very Persons who injure us, may be accounted for on Supposition, that God commands it, and will reward us for it hereafter. But if Men hope for nothing of this, they will be so far from having any sufficient Encouragement to conform themselves to these Precepts, that there doth not seem to be any tolerable Ground in Reason, from whence to collect these Precepts. *St. Paul* himself, in the very Chapter now before

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before us, seems to approve the Epicurean Reasoning; *Let us eat and drink, if To-morrow we must die* for ever. If Men are to enjoy nothing but in this Life, they are surely concerned to make the most of this Life; and not to hazard, much less to throw up, its chiefest Advantages for the sake of a Public, in which they can have no Interest.

The *Gentiles* therefore, who taught or practised any of the foregoing Duties, did so, because they did in fact believe what the Supposition in our present Argument excludes; and, consequently, what they would not have concerned themselves either to teach or practise, if they had entertained no Hopes of the Future.—But, is this the Case of the Christian? Though he should be supposed void of all comfortable Hope, yet this alters not his Scheme of Duties; which, being prepared to his Hand, he will think himself at no Liberty to change. By these he will reckon himself perpetually bound, notwithstanding he perceives not the natural Ground or Foundation of these Duties. His Obligations therefore being more extensive, and in several Instances more grievous, than those which other Men lie under, I shall not doubt to affirm, that his general Condition must so

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far be disadvantageous; and, consequently, that without the Hope of a better Life hereafter, the Christian, as such, is in a worse, and more unhappy, State than other Men.

After all, I would not be understood to carry the Argument so far in reference to Christians through all Ages of the World, as we ought to carry it in regard to the First Preachers of the Gospel, or to Christians of the more early Ages. Their Circumstances had something in them particular. Still, as the Position in the Text is justifiable, though in a lower Sense, when applied to every other sincere Christian, his State ought not to be entirely excluded from this Argument. In this it hath its proper, though subordinate, Share; and such as, rightly understood, will further the general Design of our Apostle in establishing the Certainty of a better State hereafter.

III. I shall now proceed to enforce the Conclusion which our Apostle would be understood to draw from the foregoing Positions; which was the Third thing I proposed to speak to. The Conclusion indeed is not expressly mentioned: But his Manner of proceeding intimates the Thing so plainly, that

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no one capable of understanding his Positions, can miss the Inference. He says, *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* If not in truth most miserable, then our Hope in Christ must extend beyond this Life; and from this Hope, I shall farther infer the Reality of the Thing hoped for.

That we may have a clearer View of this Argument, I shall endeavour to explain its Force, from considering, First, the Necessity, and, Secondly, the actual Subsistence, of this Hope.

In the Management of our Apostle's Argument, I have already considered the Condition of Mankind in general, and of Christians in particular; as well those who lived in the more trying Times, as those in the more quiet Ages of the Church; and I have endeavoured to shew their general Condition such, as, without the Hope of something better hereafter, cannot but be esteemed unhappy. There are, and without Question have been, many Exceptions to this: But if the general State be as I have represented it, the Necessity of such an Hope arises; and from the Necessity of this Hope, I shall evince the Reasonableness of our Expectation.

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But, in order to establish this Conclusion, some things must be supposed: Such Principles, for Instance, as these:—There is a God, the Author of Man's Existence. — This Being hath the entire Government of that World he once created:—He is perfectly Just, Wise, Good; and cannot, in any one single Instance, in the least deviate from these Perfections. These Principles being laid down, the following Question must arise: Whether the State of Things before represented, can be accounted for consistently with these Perfections, unless we suppose some future State to make amends for present Irregularities? But to decide this Question, some others will arise, to which the Answer will be ready. As, for Instance; Whether the Supreme Being (who is perfect Reason, as being perfectly Wise) had not something more in View when he created Man, than the bare Exercise of Power? And, whether this View did not extend itself to the Happiness of Man, so far as he should be capable of it, and not disqualified by his own blameable Conduct? Both these Questions I shall affirm, trusting that every-one else will readily affirm them with me.

To go on: It may be demanded, whether
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It be consistent with common Justice to produce any sensible Creature for the sake of making him completely miserable? Or with such a needless Over-balance of Calamity compared with his Enjoyments, as shall render his Condition upon the whole unhappy? — Whether it be at all consistent with Wisdom not to pursue the End which it proposed to itself; *viz.* The Happiness of Man upon the whole, since the Means of pursuing it are entirely in its own Power? And, Lastly, whether Goodness (which ever disposes the Being possessed of it to communicate all proper Good); — whether Goodness, I say, can allow so great a Number of Mankind to be, without their own Fault, unavoidably, and beyond all Remedy, miserable? The Negative in all these latter Questions is so apparent, as scarce to need or admit a Proof.

From hence I shall establish my Conclusion: For if God intended the Happiness of Man; — if all the foregoing Attributes require that he should promote this Happiness in every proper Way; — and if he can never want either the Skill to contrive, or the Power to execute, what is necessary for this End, it must be indisputable, that if this be not done in the present World, and during the present Life,

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Life, it remains to be accomplished in some other Place, and some future Life. The Consequence is immediate, and needs no Acuteness either to discern it ourselves, or to make it out to others.

Nor will it be sufficient to say, that the present Constitution of Things, and general Measures of Providence, will not allow of such a Regulation. The Observation indeed is true; but the Application, in the present Case, impertinent: For if this Right cannot be properly done at present, and under the Constitution which now prevails, it remains to be done hereafter; and hereafter it must be done: For God can no more render any Man miserable without his own Fault, by a Constitution which he fixed himself, than he can be supposed to do so by mere absolute Will, and without regarding any Constitution at all.

To as little Purpose will it be to alledge, that many of those Evils which constitute the Unhappiness of Mankind, are owing to their own Follies and Vices; and which Providence therefore is not concerned to prevent: For who are the Persons to whose Follies or Vices these forementioned Evils are owing? Are they such only as in fact suffer from them? If that
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be true, the Allegation is right, and the Objection unanswerable. But doth it not frequently happen, that wise and innocent Men suffer from the Vices or Follies of others? which, if Providence could not properly prevent, it seems concerned, in some other Way, to make amends: And if this be not done in the present Life, our Conclusion will stand good: It must be done in a future.

If, beyond this, it should be suggested, in Prejudice to the Argument I am upon, that the bare Hope of an Amends hereafter will bear Men up, and make Life worth having, though such Hope should fail at last, and no future State answer it; —if this, I say, be suggested, —it will be easy to reply, First, that the Condition of some Persons is so extremely wretched, as makes them incapable of being supported even by this Hope: The Miseries they suffer are not only excessive in Degree, but constant and unintermitted; in which Case, their Minds being overborn by present Feeling, they are incapable of giving Attention to any future Prospects; and, consequently, of receiving that Consolation from them, which they are otherwise fitted to produce. What therefore shall we say of their Case? Are they to be left destitute, and to
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meet with no future Reparation? This cannot be said, if God be just and good; for he can no more fail in displaying these Perfections with regard to any *one* Man, than with regard to *all*. We may reply, in the next place, that if the Consideration of the Prevalency of Evil above Good, during the present Life, be a reasonable Ground of Hope, it must likewise be esteemed a sufficient Reason, on which to build the Reality of the Thing hoped for. A reasonable Hope, without a Reason to believe this Hope shall be hereafter answered, is a Contradiction so express, as no one can miss the seeing, who doth not first resolve against Conviction, and then endeavour to screen himself from it by using Words without Meaning. But if any one shall still insist upon this, it may be proper to remind him, that this supposed Hope can have very little Effect, whilst he thinks it gives him no Security of Hereafter; or rather, it will serve to render his Case so much the worse, as it proposes to him an Amends which he must consider only as possible, but concerning it can receive no manner of Assurance.

I am led from hence to that other Point I designed to speak to; *viz.* To establish my
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Conclusion from the actual Subsistence of this Hope. I have just now observed, that the same Grounds which make it reasonable to entertain this Hope, must in proportion prove the Certainty of the future Good we hope for. Here I shall put another Case; that, namely, which supposes the Hope of another Life, not produced in us by a Course of Reasoning, but owing to some other Cause;—to our natural Wishes of it, or to natural Instinct. And this Case we are the more concerned to give Attention to, because the Generality of Mankind, being incapable of close Reasoning, can build it on no other Foot: And yet notwithstanding it is Matter of Fact, that the Hope I am speaking of hath prevailed in all Ages, and in all Places, very few, in comparison, being without it; and of these few, most being led to dispute it rather from a certain Fear, that their bad Actions may hereafter be punished, than through any real and inward Disbelief. But, can we suppose there is no real Ground of Truth in a Persuasion which prevails almost universally? Is not general Consent admitted as a good Argument in all other Cases? Does not such a Consent shew, that it is in some sort natural to the Mind to give it? And can Nature de-
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ceive us? We may conclude therefore, from this very Disposition of Mind to embrace this Hope, that it hath some proper and real Object;---something which will answer it hereafter: On any other Supposition, our Constitution itself will be wrong, and the Conduct of our Great Creator unaccountable.

This Argument is built on the Generality of this Hope, without taking into Consideration the particular Causes I before suggested. But if these, some of them at least, be attended to, the Proof will be much stronger. Thus, for Instance: We naturally wish for an immortal Life, and do as naturally dread an utter Extinction of Being. But is this Desire, is this Aversion, implanted in us for nothing? Can we suppose that an All-good Being would create in us a Desire which is never to be gratified, and an Aversion which can only torture us by the supposed Unavoidableness of the Thing we dread? If this must not be supposed, then the Desire and Aversion I have now mentioned, can be considered by us as none other, than Divine Declarations of the Truth I am establishing.

Once more: That Instinct, which I have said before impels Men to embrace this Hope, must be considered by us as decisive on this Subject,

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Subject, and what must confirm the Conclusion before us beyond all Question: For this is a direct Leading Men to the Point: It is in Effect the same, as if God had declared in so many Words, "There shall be another State hereafter;" and we can no more suppose him to deceive us in the one Case, than in the other. Other Reasonings, built on remote Principles, and carried on in a long Chain, will be subject to great Mistakes; and the Effect of them, when rightly conducted, will be less powerful, from an Apprehension that some false Step may have been made: But here, in this Argument, the Conclusion is immediate: The Hope we entertain is grounded on Instinct; which being a Divine Impress on the Mind, this Hope itself is directly caused by God: And if it be, then, by causing it, doth God himself confirm it.

Having thus far endeavoured to establish the Certainty of a future State, as well from the Necessity, as the actual Subsistence of our Hope concerning it; I shall now, under my Last Head, make a Reflection or two on the Whole. And,

I. I would observe, that whereas the Argument insisted on hath its main Foundation

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in the Calamities Men are subject to during the present Life, and the Necessity we are under to suppose a future better State to make amends for these Calamities,---so such a State being once supposed, all Difficulties clear up at once. Happiness, on this Foot, will preponderate ; and Providence be vindicated, not only as to the Justice, but the Goodness likewise, of its Proceedings.

But, beyond this, another Consideration remains, which could not so properly be alledged before ; *viz.* That the consummate Wisdom of the Divine Administration is hereby illustrated to Advantage : For this future State being established, and the present preparatory only to a future, the very Calamities we labour under are but so many Means necessary either to procure or to heighten future Enjoyments.

This Conclusion will appear in a stronger Light, if we consider the Infirmities of our present moral Condition ; by which, being in a great measure disqualified for the Happiness designed hereafter, we need much Correction ; and, like Persons diseased, must submit to some very severe Operations, in order to recover that Health, which, once procured, shall make amends for all our present Sufferings.

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Sufferings. This Representation of Man, as labouring under a moral Disease, is not only a Representation just, but what deserves a stricter Attention; because it will serve to explain the Reasons of God's Proceedings with us more clearly than can be done in any other Way.

Upon this Foot, let us suppose the disagreeable Method of Cure dropt; — the Disease to continue; ---and, instead of abating, to be heightened in Degree, and enlarged as to its Extent. What then would be the Consequence? Would any greater Happiness arise to Man from such a Dispensation, than what he enjoys at present? I believe not: Because, whatever the external Evils are we are exposed to, they cannot be greater than those Miseries, which, by an abandoned Course, we must bring upon ourselves. I do not say, that Virtue is Self-sufficient: The foregoing Argument receives a great deal of its Weight from a contrary Supposition: The Evils of Life will have their Effect on us, and be felt most sensibly: But still, if a Man be virtuous, or endeavour to be so to the utmost of his Power, the Consciousness of this will administer somewhat of Comfort; and tho' it cannot remove his Sufferings, will abate

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his Sense of them : It will not, under such Circumstances, make him happy ; but it will certainly render him less miserable.

On the other hand, let us suppose a very wicked Man possessed of those external Advantages, which we are apt to think the Ground of present Happiness : To him they will be tasteless and insipid : His Extravagancies will destroy his very Pleasures ; His Debaucheries will impair his Health : And, under the Sense of those Miseries he hath brought upon himself, he can find no Relief, whilst his own Conscience must ever accuse and condemn him.

Let us remember then what I said before, that a vicious Disposition should be considered as a sore Disease ; which, at the same time it wants a Cure, can receive it in no other Way, than that of severe Discipline : For, as our chief Disorder arises from an Over-balance of the animal Affections compared with the rational, the Way to check these, must be, to withdraw whatever may serve to inflame them ; and, by mingling a proper Quantity of the disagreeable with the more agreeable Perceptions of Sense, to produce a Disregard to such Perceptions ; and make Men attend more closely to the Dictates of pure Reason.

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Where there are fewer Temptations to sin, there is a less Likelihood of encreasing our Corruption; and where the Accidents of Life are so unpleasant, as to over-power the very Sense of our Enjoyments, we are forced to take Refuge in something else; in something which will abate our Sufferings for the present, and make way for an entire Cure of them hereafter.

This Consideration of itself would suggest something better hereafter;—to those at least who are capable of improving the Thought: And attending to this Suggestion, we shall be led on farther to discern (what the Engagements of Life might not permit us otherwise to see), that the Happiness we hope for hereafter may be built on the very Unhappiness we suffer at present: I do not mean barely, that infinite Goodness (which presides over all) will not fail us at last, but rather will reward our Sufferings here, by greater Degrees of future Enjoyment: I mean not this alone; but I do intend likewise, that our present Afflictions are Preparations, in a natural Way, for that excellent State we are to enter upon hereafter. And this may be supported, not only by considering, that, as being Means of Virtue, they must be Means

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likewise of that Happiness, which is the Consequence of Virtue ; — but also, that every foregoing Pain removed, heightens the Perception of every succeeding Pleasure. This is found to be true by Experience : And indeed it is the very Course of Nature to prepare the Way for most of our innocent Enjoyments by something beforehand disagreeable,----which serves to quicken our Desires after them, and to heighten our Taste of them when present. So Hunger and Thirst, in proportion to their several Degrees, make us search after a Relief of our bodily Wants, and take a Satisfaction in answering the Cravings of Nature, which could not by any other Means be obtained. In some such Way may we suppose the Difficulties of our present Being may contribute as well to increase the Sense of future Enjoyments, as to procure them.

And of this every Man will be able to form some Notion, by supposing himself once possessed of the Happiness he now hopes for ;---of an Happiness great as his Wishes, and durable as his very Being. With what Joy must he look back on the painful Steps he hath taken towards it, and bless the kind Hand which made him perfect by Sufferings?

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The Memory of what he endured — (because it is now past, and to return no more) brings with it nothing of that Pain, which we are apt to feel from the Remembrance of Evil to which we are still exposed again; all Fear being extinguished, what is properly Pain, and was chiefly caused by Fear, must die with it: But that disagreeable Sharpness, which, during our present Life, the Remembrance of Ill carries with it, corrected by the Circumstances we are then in, will only serve to mingle with, and so give a quicker Relish to our Enjoyments. So much doth Good itself arise out of Evil.

I will add One Reflection more, and have done. Since the Hope of a better State hereafter is so necessary to support us under the Calamities of our present Condition, we cannot sufficiently adore the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who hath been pleased, by express Revelation, to confirm to us this important Hope. Even before the express Revelation of God's Will, Hope of this kind prevailed; and was entertained by almost every-one in a greater or less Degree: And, in proportion to the Strength and Vigour of their Hope, were Men born up against pressing Calamity, and animated in performing

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some of the most difficult Parts of Virtue. But yet, as this Hope was not perfectly alike in every-one, nor the same even in the same Man at all times, it is no Wonder if their Conduct was very unequal ; it is no Wonder if they were sometimes more sensible of Misfortune, or more irregular in their Behaviour, than at others : For the Perfection of every Effect must be answerable to the Perfection of its Cause.

The more rude and illiterate Part of Mankind derived this Hope (as was observed in a former Discourse) either from Tradition,----or from human Teaching,----or from their own strong Wishes,---or from a kind of natural Instinct. Where any of these Causes subsisted singly, the Hope produced must be weaker : Where they all concurred, it must be carried to a great Degree of Perfection ; and might (as in some Instances it actually did) enable them to suffer bravely, and to act greatly. Still, we cannot but perceive some sort of Defect even in this Hope ; which being supported rather by strong Presumptions, than the clear Evidence of the Thing, must often want that Life and Vigour, which Demonstration, closely attended to, might produce. Yet, such as it was, it served
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many

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many noble Purposes, and ought to be considered as a most valuable Gift of Providence. —The better educated,---the Learned, and Philosophical, had all these Advantages, and greater: For, having been used to look forward from Causes to Effects, and to trace back Effects to their proper Causes, they were able to draw a rational Argument from the very Presumptions now mentioned; —from our very Desires of it, to infer our Immortality; —and from the very Subsistence of our Hope, to conclude the Certainty of the Thing hoped for.

Beside this, by philosophical Skill, rightly applying several other undeniable Principles, they could raise new Arguments in favour of this Hope; —could prove a Distinction between Mind and Body; —an Independency of the Mind on the Body, as to its Existence; —in consequence of this, a Subsistence of the Mind after the Body is dissolved; ---and, from considering the Divine Perfections, a future Subsistence of this Mind in a State conscious of Happiness or Misery. All this, I say, the Learned might discover, as some of them in fact did. Yet still, had this *all* the Effects which Demonstration is apt to produce on other less interesting Occasions? Their Arguments were, many of

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them, subtle ; and which, upon Reflection, they were afraid might not conclude strictly : They could not always keep their best Arguments in full View : Subtleties were sometimes opposed to Subtleties ; and they could not tell how to disengage themselves entirely : Doubts arose, which they were desirous to have solved ; and though such Doubts were not sufficient to overthrow their Hope, yet they abated much of it, and rendered it of less Force, upon great and trying Emergencies : The very Importance--(the infinite Importance, I should say) of this Hope, did sometimes, in their more melancholy Hours, disquiet them, and put them upon vain Wishes of some stronger Confirmation, than the Circumstances they were placed in could admit of.

Under this View of their State, what could Providence do better, or greater, than to open at once this great Scene, and to dispel those Mists, which clouded it ? This it hath done by the Revelation of Jesus Christ ; who (to use the Scripture Expression) *hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel* [2 Tim. i. 10.] By this every foregoing Argument is shewn in its full Strength ;—the Vanity of every contradicting Subtlety exposed ;—the Doubts, which

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which were produced rather by the Obscurity of the Subject, than the ill Temper of the Doubter, removed ;—and the Wishes of a Confirmation answerable to the Importance of the Hope itself, gratified. All is now Day and Brightness : For, by Faith in God (who cannot possibly deceive us), we may, as it were, see, and feel, and taste, what, before this Revelation, we could only wish, or presume, or hope for.

What now remains, but to use this Light for the Purposes designed by Providence ;—to abide, and to rejoice, in it ;—to thank God for begetting us to such a lively Hope ; and to keep the Sense of it perpetually present to our Minds. This will enable us to perform our Duty with Chearfulness,—to enjoy the Blessings of Life with Innocence,—to endure its Calamities with Patience,—to attempt great and difficult Things with Resolution, and to encounter even Death itself, not only without Terror, but with some Degree of Pleasure. Thus shall we go on from one Degree of Perfection to another, till at length this Hope, having accomplished every thing else it was designed to accomplish, shall at last fulfil itself, and then determine by the real Enjoyment of the Things hoped for.

S E R-

SERMON XIV.

Different Degrees of Happiness in a
future State.

I JOHN iii. 2.

— *It doth not yet appear what we shall be ;
But we know, when He shall appear, we
shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as
He is.*

OUR Apostle, in the former Verse, had celebrated the Divine Goodness, in bestowing on us the Title of *being Sons of God* ; a Title, as to mere Denomination, common indeed to all who profess the Faith of Christ ; — but, as to real and advantageous Consequences, proper to those who support that Character by a suitable Course of Duty.

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The present Privileges arising from this Title, may be expressed in general by the Favour of the Supreme Being: But in particular, they denote, Pardon of Sin,—the Aid of Grace,—Support in Being,—Protection from Danger;—together with the Conveniencies of the present Life. Those of a spiritual Nature are conferred absolutely; but those of a temporal Kind are bestowed with some sort of Limitation; *viz.* just so far as is best upon the Whole, and most agreeable with the general Scheme of Things.

Beyond all this, the Title of *being Sons of God* (if supported by a persevering Course of Duty) will be followed by much greater Blessings in Reserve;—Blessings to be reaped in another World, and commensurate with the whole Extent of our endless Being: But what there shall be in particular, is a Secret to us at present. The Text says, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*

Nor can this be any Matter of Wonder to those who consider the Nature and Reasons of Things: For all particular Knowledge must arise, either from the direct Perceptions of Things immediately present; or from a Revival of such as we once enjoyed; or, at least,

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least, from a Comparison with such others, as have a near Resemblance with those they are intended to represent. But this State itself being future, direct, and immediate, Perceptions of it cannot be had as of a Thing present. The Difference between the State of Things in this World and the next, makes it impossible to acquire a distinct Knowledge of it from Memory and Recollection : And though the Sacred Writings have sometimes represented Matters of this kind by Objects most apt to affect us, yet the Knowledge from hence arising must be indistinct and disproportionate : And therefore such Representations seem rather intended to confirm our Faith in the Reality of future Happiness, than to inform us what it truly is.

Upon this Foot even Revelation itself could impart such Knowledge to those only to whom it is immediately made. These indeed, by Divine Impression, may receive Perceptions entirely correspondent to what they represent : But, as others have no Conceptions of that kind, so no Language can express them truly : And therefore, as we, who have not felt that Happiness, are unable to conceive it ; so those, who may have felt, are equally unable to represent it.

However,

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However, though a distinct and *particular* Knowledge of this Matter be unattainable in our present State, yet somewhat may be affirmed in *general* concerning it, with great Truth and Certainty. *We know*, saith our Apostle, *we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.* To be like God is the End and Design of our Religion; and required of us even as a Matter of Duty in the present Life. *Be ye perfect*, saith our Saviour, *as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect* [Mat. v. 48.] But this kind of Similitude comes far short of that which is intended in the Text: For that refers only to the other World; and is considered rather as the Reward we are to enjoy hereafter, than the present Condition of obtaining it. *As yet, it doth not appear what we shall be: But when He shall appear; that is, after the last Judgment, we shall be like Him; for which a Reason is assigned peculiar to the other World; viz. we shall see Him as He is.*

But if this Resemblance to God, of which the Text speaks, be peculiar to the next Life, a Question will arise, wherein it doth properly consist? To which it will be no unreasonable Answer, to say, In the general *Perfection*. And forasmuch as some Perfections of
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the Divine Nature are absolutely incommunicable, we must understand it of those only of which such a Creature as Man is capable ; —and principally of those which relate either to the Understanding,---or to the Will, ---or to that which results from the Perfection of both ; *viz.* Happiness.

Yet, when I speak of good Men being *like God* hereafter in Perfection, I must desire to be understood with Favour : Far from intimating a Resemblance of Equality (for this were absurd and blasphemous), I mean only a Resemblance in Kind ; such a one as admits of Degrees ; and in which even those of the highest Class are still infinitely removed from the Perfection of God himself : For his Perfection is strictly infinite ; whereas ours, notwithstanding its greatest Improvement, must be finite.

It seems then, from considering the Words before us, the State of good Men in the other World will carry with it a Resemblance to the absolutely perfect Being in those Perfections of which Man is capable : And these are produced in us (as we are here likewise informed) by *seeing God as He is* ; that is, by a vastly more distinct, and more full, Sight of him, than the present Condition of human Nature will admit of. From

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From this Account of the Matter, the following Question, as well as some others, which I cannot attend to at present, will arise; *viz.*

Whether this State, in another Life, shall be equally the same to all good Men? or, in other Words, a State of equal Perfection and Happiness. This Enquiry I shall now endeavour to satisfy; and then make such Improvements of the Doctrine advanced by me, as may prove most useful in the Conduct of Life.

The Happiness of another World may be considered by us, either as the natural Consequence of Virtue,---or else, as the Reward appointed for it by God himself. But in neither View can this Happiness be the same to all, unless we suppose in them an equal Progress in Virtue: And this cannot be supposed without maintaining farther, either that Virtue admits of no Degrees,---or else, that no good Men, excepting those who attain the highest Degree of it, of which human Nature is capable, shall enjoy this Happiness.

If this Happiness be considered as the natural Consequence of Virtue, agreeably to that Order which was originally established in the Creation, then must we esteem it, in some sense,

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sense, the Effect of its proper Cause; and forasmuch as Causes and Effects must always bear a due Proportion to each other, it is impossible but Mens Happiness must be greater or less, as their Virtue hath been more or less improved.

Or, if we drop this View of the Matter, and consider Happiness as that Reward of Virtue which God himself hath appointed, —yet still we shall meet the same Conclusion: For God is not, and possibly cannot be, arbitrary in the Distribution of Rewards: He must act according to the Fitness of Things, where Fitness can be a Rule of Action: And Virtue (which is the Ground and Foundation of Reward) must ever carry with it such Fitness, as strongly recommends to those Rewards which appear suitable to it.

We must distinguish therefore between those Things which are properly Rewards, and those which are merely Acts of Favour: The latter (supposing there be no Unfitness in them) are the Subject of mere Will and Pleasure; and, consequently, may be exercised *when*, and *where*, and to *whom*, God pleases. These require none other Reason, as their Ground, than this; That no sufficient Reason lies against them. But the Case

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is different with regard to those Blessings which are, properly speaking, Rewards. These have always a Reference to something done, which is the Ground and Reason of bestowing them; and, consequently, must be suited to the Degrees and Excellency of that Virtue they are designed to recompense.

But, it may possibly be said, that Virtue is a purely simple Thing, and incapable of Degrees: And this indeed is true, if we consider it as subsisting in the Divine Nature, of which it is one absolute Perfection. But, is this the Virtue of which we are now speaking?—Is this *human Virtue*, and that which is properly rewardable?—Let it be remembered then, that we are now speaking, not concerning that *absolute Virtue*, which can be found only in God himself,—but of that less perfect and *relative* moral Excellence, of which created Beings are capable; in whom Virtue is not understood to signify (as it doth in God) an *absolute Perfection*, but only some Approach towards it: And therefore, as such an Approach may be greater or less in different Persons, so their Virtue will be estimated by greater or less Degrees.

All this may be allowed; and yet it may
be

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be maintained, that the Happiness of good Men, in the other World, shall be one and the same ; because none shall be admitted to it but those who attain the highest Degree of that Virtue of which human Nature is capable. This may perhaps be said. : But can it be as easily proved as said ? Have we any Authority for maintaining this uncomfortable Doctrine, which must reprobate the far greatest Part of Mankind ? The highest Degree of that Virtue of which human Nature is at present capable, is attainable by those few only, who have enjoyed the greatest Advantages ;—by those, whose Constitutions have favoured it, — in whom Education hath promoted it, — whose Acquaintances and Friendships have quickened it,---to whom Occasions of drawing it forth into Action have been offered, —and where Temptations to the contrary have been less frequent and pressing. —But what, in the mean while, shall become of others, whose native Dispositions have been untoward, —whose Minds have been imperfectly cultivated in their more tender Years, —and whose Difficulties, in their moral Course, have prevented those Improvements, which might have been made under better Circumstances ?

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I do not say, that the Condition of any Man is so very unfavourable to Virtue, as to render his Acquisition of its *lowest* Degree impossible. Yet thus much will appear from considering what I have now suggested, that the Circumstances of the far greatest Part give us no Grounds to hope their Attainment of the *highest*. Of consequence, Men of different Attainments, in this respect, may be admitted to future Happiness; or else, the Condition of the Generality of the human Race must be absolutely desperate.

But is this at all supposable by us? Is it agreeable to the natural Notions we have of an All-good Being? Could he bestow Existence on any-one with a Design to make him miserable to all Eternity? Could he prescribe such Conditions of avoiding this Misery, as are absolutely impossible to be performed? Or rather, could he create him, without intending, at the same time, that he should be capable of some Degrees even of Happiness itself? It seems therefore to appear from hence, that Men of lower Attainments in Virtue may still be happy in proportion to such Attainments, whilst others of an higher moral Rank may be distinguished by greater Degrees of Glory.

Still,

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Still, this Conclusion may possibly be contested farther. It may be said, that supposing, in the present Life, a Difference, as to the moral Attainments of good Men, who may all of them become Objects of Favour, yet, at the Resurrection, this Difference shall be adjusted by such supernatural Infusion of Holiness, as shall place them all upon an equal Foot; and, consequently, qualify and prepare them for equal Degrees of Happiness.

Upon this Suggestion (if such should be ever made), it will be sufficient to observe, that it is entirely unsupported by any Shew of Proof. Reason cannot teach us, that, where our own Acquisition of Virtue is to be rewarded, there can be any Need of adventitious supernatural Virtue, in order to its just Reward: Nor ought we to expect any miraculous Infusions, in order to qualify us for something greater, than what the State, in which we have chosen to place ourselves, shall fit us for. One might rather conclude the contrary; and argue from the Principles of Reason, that, as the next Life is to make Retribution for what we have done in the present, there nothing shall come into Account, but what we ourselves have had our Share in doing; and, of course, that God

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will not, in any extraordinary Way, set us above our Rank, nor place us upon an equal Footing with those, who have done more, and intitled themselves to greater Happiness.

Nor will it be sufficient to alledge, that future Happiness being the Purchase of Christ's Blood, it must be referred rather to the Price paid for it, than to the Works done in order to obtain it: Upon which Foot, as the highest human Virtue, being imperfect, can merit no Reward, but must acquire a Value only from the Merits of our Blessed Saviour;—so the lowest Attainment in it becomes of equal Value on the Score of the same infinite Merits. From whence it may be said to follow, that forasmuch as the Condition of all good Men is, in this respect, equal, their Happiness, in another Life, shall be equal likewise.

Now here it must be allowed, that the most consummate human Virtue is imperfect, and can properly merit no Reward; and that, as the Case now stands, the Merits of Christ must come in to make any sort of Reward attainable. It is on this Foot that all good Men, whether of the highest or of the lowest Rank, are admitted to any Degree of Happiness.

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piness. But still these Merits serve only to render us capable of Reward, and not to determine the Degrees of that Reward itself: That is a Point of another kind, and to be settled by other Considerations.

To speak strictly, Christ, by his Death, hath purchased for us the Forgiveness of past Sins, and by that means restored us to that State of Acceptance with God, which we should have met with, had we never sinned at all: And as, in such a Case, the Degrees of Reward hereafter must have been proportioned to the Advancement Men made in Virtue, so the like Measures, we presume, will be followed in the present Constitution. We conclude therefore, that the right Consideration of Christ's Merits is so far from prejudicing the Doctrine advanced, that it rather favours it.

I shall note one Difficulty farther, which may seem to arise on this Point; and that is drawn from the Words of my Text; *When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.* In these Words the State of good Men hereafter is represented as a State of Resemblance to God; that is, such a State of Perfection as the Condition of human Nature will admit of. And this is far-

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ther said to result from, or to be produced in us by, *seeing God as He is*. Now, where the Cause is one, and acts uniformly, there the Effect must be one and the same; and therefore, since all good Men *shall see God as He is*, and this Sight of him shall produce in them a suitable Resemblance to him, this Resemblance, or Perfection, must be one and the same in all.

If any shall argue in this manner, they do not consider, that to estimate the Degrees of any Effect, we must regard not only the Force of the Agent, but the Condition likewise of that Being in which the Effect is produced: And therefore, though in the next Life each good Man shall *see God as He is*, and such a Sight shall naturally assimilate the Person favoured with it to the All-perfect Being whom he sees,---yet still this must be done in proportion to the Capacity he brings with him of being wrought on; which being various in different Persons, the Effect likewise must be different.

Or we may carry the Matter still farther; and alledge, that notwithstanding the Object of this Sight hereafter shall be the same to all, and the Veil, which now covers it, being taken off, this Object shall be alike exposed

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to all; yet still the Perceptions resulting may be different: For what if there be a Variety in the very Power of Seeing? Must there not arise from hence a suitable Variety, as to Fulness in the Sight itself? And if this be the Case, then here is a double Ground on which to build the Doctrine I have advanced; *viz.* a Difference between good Men hereafter as to the Sight of God, as well as a Difference as to that Resemblance which this Sight produces.

Nothing now remains, but to shew, that the Holy Scriptures confirm the Conclusions of human Reason on this Head; in which it is as certainly declared, that there shall be a Difference of Reward hereafter, as that there shall be any Reward at all bestowed.

Else, how comes it to pass, that whilst our Blessed Lord affirms in one Place, *That he who giveth to one of his Disciples a Cup of cold Water in the Name of a Disciple, he shall in no-wise lose his Reward*; that is, a Reward suitable to this lower Instance of Service [Mat. x. 42.] — yet in another, speaking of those who *are persecuted for Righteousness sake*, he saith, *Great is their Reward in Heaven* [Mat. v. 12.] — Great in proportion to the Sufferings they undergo, and the Vir-
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tue which they hereby manifest. Else, how is it, that *St. Paul* teaches us, *He who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully?* [*2 Cor. ix. 6.*] — How is it, that whilst our Blessed Saviour saith, *He will reward every-one according to his Works* [*Mat. xvi. 27.*] *St. Paul* explains this Promise by teaching, *That every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own Labour?* [*1 Cor. iii. 8.*] — How again is it, that, in the Parable of the Talents, our Saviour represents the Person, who had made a Tenfold Improvement, as rewarded Tenfold; — whilst another, whose Improvements were less, received only a proportionably less Reward? [*Luke xix. 16—19.*] Lastly, how is it, that whilst our Saviour affirms, that *in his Father's House are many Mansions* [*John xiv. 2.*] *St. Paul* declares, that *as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, so also is the Resurrection of the Dead* [*1 Cor. xv. 41.*] that is, the State of good Men after the Resurrection.

It would be easy to produce more Passages to the same Purpose: But these, I hope, are sufficient to convince us, that notwithstanding every thing is not clear to us in reference to

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to the other World, yet something may still be known; this especially, that there will be a proper Rank and Order amongst good Men there preserved, agreeably to those moral Qualifications, with which each particular Person shall be furnished.

Several useful Reflections may be made on this Doctrine, which I shall now beg Leave to suggest to you. And,

I. From hence will appear the different Importance of our *temporal* and *spiritual* Interests; since the former are in a great Degree out of our Command, and the latter are principally dependent on ourselves.

What is absolutely unattainable, is not properly the Object of Desire. Appetite, under such a Circumstance, could only serve to torment us: And there cannot be a greater Misery conceived, than perpetually to desire, and to despair. Next to this may we reckon any vehement Desire of those things, which, though in some sense attainable, yet are not at our own Command; because this must frequently subject us to Disappointment; and the Pain from thence arising must be equal at least to the Satisfaction which might arise from our Success. But where the Good aimed at is not only great, but entirely within
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our Reach, there the Matter before us is of the greatest Consequence ; we are concerned to give it our utmost Attention ; it properly belongs to us ; it is an Interest, in the strictest Sense, our own. On this Foot let us compare the *temporal* and *spiritual* Interests of Men.

As to the Advantages of Life (which are commonly called the Goods of Fortune), after the utmost we can do towards the Attainment, of them, our Success must be uncertain : Perhaps we ourselves may err in the Measures we pursue ; or Accidents, which we could not foresee, may disappoint us ; or the interfering Interests of other Men may break in upon us ; or, as it sometimes happens, Envy and Malice, unprovoked and unsuspected, may entirely defeat our Expectations. In such a Situation, what can we promise ourselves with any Degree of Assurance ? And, therefore, how much are we concerned not to raise our Hopes higher, nor to make our Confidence stronger, than the Circumstances of these Things can warrant ?

On the other hand, if we consider our spiritual Interests, these are dependent on ourselves. Happiness, in another Life, is the
Reward

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Reward of Virtue manifested in this; and Virtue (if we consider what the Word itself imports) must arise, in some sense, from ourselves. I do not deny the Necessity of Grace (especially under the present Circumstances of our Nature): But this Grace itself supposes our Endeavours; and these Endeavours make the Work, in some sort, our own. Happiness therefore in another Life, as being the Reward of these Endeavours, is so far an Acquisition which we ourselves make: For, though without Grace we can do nothing, yet, since this Grace will be ineffectual unless we ourselves co-operate, the Effect which follows must be so far dependent on us; and therefore Heaven itself, tho' very properly the Gift of God, yet, as being offered to us on Condition of Obedience, is, on that account, within our Reach.

Beyond this, the Doctrine before advanced teaches, that the very Degrees of Happiness, in another Life, are as really dependent on ourselves, as that Happiness itself is. This gives a greater Weight to the Consideration before us. On this Foot it is in our Power to raise ourselves to the higher Degrees of Distinction; since, as these follow our Improvement in Virtue,—and this Improvement will

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will be proportioned to our Endeavours, we are as much secure of the Event, as we are, that we are Masters of ourselves: And if any one will deny, that we have any Mastery of ourselves; that is, that we have any Degree of Liberty; it will be vain to argue with him on the Point: His Notions are as inconsistent with common Sense, as with natural and revealed Religion.

2. A Second Reflection shall be this; Since the higher Degrees of Happiness hereafter must follow the higher Degrees of Virtue in this Life, this should raise our Ambition, and animate our Endeavours, after those greater Distinctions, which are proposed to us, and attainable by us.

Happiness is what we all desire: It is natural to do so; and, when we rightly attend to it, unavoidable: And as it is natural to desire Happiness, so is it likewise to aspire after the highest Degrees of it, which appear to us attainable. This is constantly seen with regard to worldly Objects, notwithstanding we are crossed by those many Difficulties which render the Attainment of our Desires precarious. But what we cannot ensure to ourselves in this World, may be rendered absolutely secure to us in another. It is

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is *there* our Supreme Interests lie; and the present Life itself is lent us but to fit and prepare us for a better.—*Here* is it, that by a Discharge of Duty, and by an Improvement in moral Excellence, we may intitle ourselves to an Inheritance hereafter;—to an Inheritance the more or less valuable, as our own Improvements in moral Virtue have been more excellent.

But a melancholy Consideration is it, that what merits our greatest Attention is too often passed over slightly: Many scarce think of it at all; and others, of a better Temper, are found rather to pursue it by Fits and Starts, than by any constant and persevering Resolution. But let us consider, whilst we have Time given us to consider it, that the Matter before us is not to be put off to some other more convenient Season: It requires, as well as deserves, our earliest Care: It contains in it the Sum of all that can be conceived valuable; because it is the Reward appointed by God for every thing in us valuable. This Reward will be proportioned to our Labour;—different to different Men, agreeably to their several Advances in Virtue: And therefore it is put within our own Power to attain the higher Degrees of it, by carrying our

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own moral Improvements to higher Degrees of Perfection.

But is it possible for us to consider this without having our Minds warmed?---without aspiring after the higher Distinctions?---Distinctions not to be recalled,---never to be forfeited,---never to be lessened,---perhaps rather to be increased and heightened through the whole Course of our unperishing and endless Being.—What a Prospect have we here before us!—A Prospect, which, one might imagine, would swallow up every thing else, and allow our Attention to nothing beside itself.

This suggests to me one farther Reflection, with which I shall close this Discourse; and that is,

3. The Consideration of those higher Degrees of Glory, which we are now aspiring after, and capable of attaining most assuredly, should wean us from all undue Attachments to the World;---should make us content with what we enjoy, and patient under what we suffer; and so prepare us for the more quick Taste of those heavenly Pleasures, which ought to be the constant Objects of our Desire.

What

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: What is there in this Life, considered by itself, which can engage the Regards of a wise and good Man? Our Enjoyments, even in their best View, are low, unsatisfactory, transient: And, when over, they bring us nothing, on the Reflection, but Remorse, if attended with any thing immoral; or, if innocent, yet a kind of Uneasiness that they are now over. Or, should we suppose them to be much greater than they really are, yet they are interspersed with so much Ill, of some sort or other, and the Sense of them is by this means so greatly abated, that, upon the whole, we scarce know how to call them Enjoyments. Life itself then, were we to look no farther, must, to a thinking Man, appear a tasteless insipid Thing at the best; but, under some Circumstances, an heavy, and truly grievous, Burthen. This manifests the great Goodness of Providence, which hath allotted us so short a Time here, where our Entertainments are so slight, and where our Sufferings are so affecting.

But, notwithstanding this, we have no Reason to be dissatisfied with our Condition: We are here but Sojourners for a

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while:

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while : Our proper Country is elsewhere : Thither we are travelling, where we shall be distinguished in proportion as we have performed our Journey well. Though the Goods of the present Life are sometimes so difficult to be come at, and, when obtained, so little satisfactory, yet the Happiness held forth to us, and attainable by us, is abundantly sufficient ; especially when we consider, that God hath put it in our own Power to be hereafter as great and happy as we please. And though the Evils we now pass through, prove, for the present, grievous, still we have a most comfortable Prospect before us ;—not only a Deliverance from these Evils, but some peculiar Rewards for having born them ;—born them, I mean, with Patience, and Resignation, and entire Submission to that merciful Providence, which inflicted them.

In truth, these very Afflictions will have a moral Influence over us, as they serve to disengage us from the World, and to turn our Thoughts to that better State of Things, which alone can support us under them.

And when they have produced this Effect, and it shall please God to take us to himself,

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himself, the very Remembrance of what we have suffered will increase our Relish of succeeding Enjoyments. In a Word, since Death will put us in Possession of this Happiness, who would not bear such a Life in order to meet such a Death!

SECTION XIV

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SERMON XV.

The Excellency of Charity above
Faith and Hope,

1 COR. xiii. 13.

*And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these
Three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

OUR Apostle, in this Chapter, recommends to us the Duty of Charity; and that in Terms which express the high Importance of the Duty recommended.

It seems, the *Corinthians*, to whom he wrote, had made a wrong Use of some of those spiritual Gifts imparted to them; and, instead of applying them to their proper Ends, had made them subservient to their Vanity: Those who were endued with super-

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rior Powers valuing themselves too much upon them, and looking down with Contempt on others, whose Endowments were of an inferior Kind. This was the Occasion of several Admonitions, both in the preceding and following Chapters.

The main End of all these spiritual Gifts, whether greater or less, was the Edification and Service of the Church. This therefore ought always to be remembered; and in the Exercise of any of these Advantages, they ought to have considered, not so much what conduced to their personal Credit, as that which might in the best manner promote the Service of the Christian Cause, and the real Benefit of those several Persons who espoused it.

Our Apostle was led, by considering this View of Charity, to treat it in a more general Way in the present Chapter; where he explains the Nature and several Branches of this Virtue,—represents its absolute Necessity in the Christian Scheme,—and its superlative Excellency in comparison with the greatest Christian Graces. This he doth in the Words of my Text: *And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these Three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

In

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In my farther Discourse on these Words,
I shall,

- I. Explain the Import of the several Virtues or Graces mentioned in the Text; *viz. Faith, Hope, and Charity.* And then,
- II. Support the Doctrine here inculcated by the Apostle; That *Charity* is more excellent than either *Faith* or *Hope*.

In Explication of the several Virtues here mentioned, I am to begin with *Faith*; which is sometimes used in such a general Sense, as to include even *Hope* itself. Thus *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews* [chap. xi. ver. 1.] tells us, *Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen.* The former Part of this Description relates to *Hope*, as the latter is an Account of *Faith* in its strictest and most proper Sense: But whereas *Hope*,—*Christian Hope* especially, must have its Foundation in *Faith*, our Apostle was from hence led to include them under one general Name.

In a more strict and proper Sense, it signifies an Assent upon Testimony, in Cases where that Testimony deserves it, and where we have none other sufficient Evidence of the

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Truth. If the Testimony be Divine, then the Faith must be so likewise; and this is the Point to which I am now to speak.

It must farther be observed, that this *Faith* relates either to *Persons* or to *Doctrines*; to the one, as the Ground of Mens Assent; and to the other, as the Subject Matter of their Belief. Thus, as to the former; *Faith in Christ* implies such an Assurance of his Divine Authority, built on the Miracles he wrought, and the Prophecies fulfilled in him, as disposeth us to receive any Doctrines he shall be pleased to impart. This, you see, may precede our Belief of particular Doctrines; and implies no more than a Readiness to receive whatsoever he shall be pleased to teach. But when *Faith* relates to the latter, it carries with it an explicit Assent to the Truth of Doctrines, however inevident of themselves, or in some respects inexplicable, on the mere Credit of the Revealer.

There is still another Notion of Faith observable in the New Testament; and to which the Words in my Text seem to have a more immediate Reference; I mean, such a strong Persuasion of the Divine Concurrence, as prompted the Apostles, and other more early Christians, to exert themselves in the
Operation.

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Operation of Miracles. Thus our *Blessed Lord* tells his Disciples [*Mat. xvii. 20.*] *If ye have Faith, as a Grain of Mustard-seed,--- nothing shall be impossible unto you.* And *St. Paul*, in this very Chapter, speaketh of that *Faith* which enabled Christians even to *remove Mountains*. As the Words of my Text seem to have a more particular Reference to this kind of Faith, so, in the following Discourse, I shall keep it in a more especial View.

The next Grace mentioned is *Hope*; by which in general must be meant the Expectation of some future Good, grounded on such probable Reasons as are sufficient to support such Expectation: But here we must remember, that *Divine Hope* (of which we are now speaking) must be founded on *Divine Reasons*;—or, if you please, on such Intimations of Divine Pleasure, as God hath thought fit to grant us: And these are either express Promises, in Cases where such Promises are made,—or else Deductions rationally drawn from the Order and Scheme of Providence.

From the foregoing Explications, you may see, not only the entire Reasonableness of exercising these Graces on the Grounds already mentioned, but likewise the infinite
Goodness

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Goodness of our Creator in affording these Grounds;—or (to use another Manner of Expression) in revealing himself so to the World, as to create in us both *Faith* and *Hope*; by the one enlarging and gratifying the Understanding, whilst by the other he supports the Will; and, by the Help of both, carrying us on, through the Paths of Religion and Virtue, to the more perfect Knowledge of those Things, which, at present, we only believe,—and the consummate Enjoyment of that Happiness which we now hope for.

Somewhat having been noted concerning the Graces of *Faith* and *Hope*, I am now led to consider the Meaning and Import of *Charity*.

Now this is sometimes understood in so extensive a Sense, as to take in even the Love of God himself; and treated not barely as a single Virtue, but the Sum and Substance of all Virtues. With this general Sense I am not concerned at present, since the Virtue of *Charity* is here to be compared with those others of *Faith* and *Hope*.

The Virtue before us implies such an affectionate Concern for the Interest of all Persons of our kind, and such a quick Sense of all
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the Good or Evil which may happen to them, as prompts us to use our best Endeavours, both to promote and secure the one, and to prevent or remove the other. This general Description must, I presume, comprehend under it each supposeable Branch or Instance of this Virtue.

I have said, that *Charity* implies an affectionate Concern for the Interest of others. In this the Virtue itself doth properly consist; and where it hath its Place, will most certainly discover itself in suitable Effects, as often as Occasions offer: For, we may assure ourselves, whoever is truly charitable, will omit no Opportunities of performing the most substantial Acts of Charity.

But, though we may thus argue from this Principle or Cause to its genuine and natural Effect, yet it may not be safe to reckon backward from what appears to be the Effect, and from thence infer, that Charity is its only Cause: For the same kind of Actions may be influenced by very different Principles; and, in some Cases, even Vanity or Self-interest may induce Men to promote the Good of others as effectually as even *Charity* itself could do. Our Apostle himself supposes, in this very Chapter, that the most
profuse

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profuse Alms-giving may be owing to indirect Causes, when he tells us, *Though I give all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, — it profiteth me nothing* [ver. 3.]

But, if this be the Case, how shall we be able to judge concerning the charitable Man, and to ascertain his real Character? — The Apostle hath taught us in the very Chapter from whence my Text is chosen; where he points out to us several other Properties, and which, joined together, must prove infallible Marks of that Virtue to which they belong.

Thus, however, we may be apt to mistake, whilst we reckon that Man truly charitable who abounds in Alms-giving; yet we cannot err, if he manifests likewise those other Properties which the Apostle mentions: For that Person must be supposed to *love* others, and to have an affectionate Concern for their Interests, who, on many Occasions, prefers their Interest, or even Claims of Interest, to his own; — who not only suffers Injuries without returning them, but is kind even to those who offer them; — who is so far from doing any Man a Disservice, that he can view with Pleasure the Advantages he meets with, from whatever Quarter they arise; — who is
neither

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neither disrespectful to his Superiors, nor troublesome to his Equals, nor insolent to his Inferiors ; but in all Relations nice and delicate as to his Behaviour, and so far from contesting the reasonable Claims of others, that he is ready even to give up his own ;— who is so candid as to put the best Interpretation upon every thing ; and so unapt to take Offence, that he can scarce persuade himself that Offence was ever intended ; always rejoicing in that better Part ; *viz.* the Presumption that Right was really intended where Appearances may lead another Way.

In consequence of this, *he beareth all things*, even those which look most like Insults ; *he believeth* they were never designed as such, at least *he hopeth* they were not ; and, if they were, he yet receives them with that Firmness of Mind, as permits him neither to disquiet himself, nor to molest others. Such a Character must be truly amiable * !

And if it be now said, that the Perfection here delineated is unattainable, let us remember, that neither *Faith* nor *Hope*, as they subsist in Men, are any more perfect than Charity. When Virtues are described, they must be drawn in strong Colours, suitable to

* See 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

their

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their particular Natures, which are always in their Kind perfect. But when we consider them as subsisting in Men, at best frail and depraved, they will always partake of our own natural Imperfections: But if we endeavour to do the most we can, and to approach as near as possible to the perfect Model before us, our Weakness will be considered as Strength, and Sincerity will fill up the Place of Perfection.

II. It will be proper that I should now proceed to my next general Head; *viz.* To support the Doctrine here inculcated by the Apostle; *viz.* That Charity is more excellent than either Faith or Hope.

Now this will appear by a due Attention to the following Particulars:

1. *Charity* hath a Place amongst the Perfections of the Divine Nature, which neither *Faith* nor *Hope* can have.
2. *Charity* is the End of *Faith* and *Hope*, and that alone whereby they can be of Service to us.
3. *Charity* is immediately connected with Happiness, which cannot be affirmed either of *Faith* or *Hope*.
4. *Charity* is absolutely necessary to Salvation,

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tion, which neither *Faith* nor *Hope* can be.
And,

Lastly, *Charity* shall be our eternal Employment in the other World, whereas *Faith* shall then be lost in Sight, and *Hope* in Enjoyment.

In reference to the First Argument, we should consider what *St. John* says [*1 John* iv. 8.] that *God is Love*: A very strong Expression; and which implies thus much at least; that this is one of the principal Perfections of his Nature.

But we need not a particular Revelation to manifest a Point, which the Light of common Sense, and the slightest Observation of ordinary Providence, will manifest without it.—What, I may demand, could be the Reason why the Supreme Being exerted his Power in the Production of intelligent Creatures? He was infinitely happy before they were;—and now they subsist, can receive no Accessions of Happiness from their best Services. It is plain, he could not create them for any Advantage to himself. It must therefore be—to communicate Happiness in proportion as they should become proper Subjects of it. And what can we call this Principle but Love;—pure, disinterested, Love;
—so

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—so complete, so absolute, that when it found not an Object on which to display itself, it made one; God manifesting, in the same Instance, an Infinitude both of Power and of Goodness.

And now he hath created, hath he left us to ourselves; without any friendly Power to support and guard us? Hath he not furnished the World, in which we are placed, with every thing needful, either for our Subsistence, or Delight? And if the present Circumstances of Things expose Men sometimes to unhappy Accidents, yet Remedies are often at hand: Or if these are wanting, or prove unsuccessful, yet whilst Men behave well, he comforts them by his secret Influences, and enables them to bear what they cannot perhaps remove.

Had Mankind continued in the same State in which it was first produced,----pure and innocent,----the World, which God then blessed, would have been blest indeed: All would have been Enjoyment, unallay'd with the least Mixture of Suffering. But Man fell from this State, and forfeited the Happiness designed him.--Yet, hath the Supreme Being rigorously exacted this Forfeiture? Did he not, in the very Instant that he condemned
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the Offender, give him Hopes of a Redemption? and testify, by this Mean, the Greatness, as well of his Mercy as his Justice?

If the promised Blessing was for several Ages delayed, yet the Promise still subsisted; apprehended in some measure, tho' darkly, even by the Heathen World; delivered more explicitly to the *Jews*; but reserved, as to its full Accomplishment, for the Christian Age, when our Blessed Lord himself appeared *to suffer Death upon the Cross*, and thereby to bring us back to God.

Warmed with the Sentiments which the foregoing Considerations must produce, let us now make the Comparison; and consider *Faith* and *Hope* in that View, which the present Argument requires. These are so far from holding the same Rank with Charity, as subsisting in the Divine Being, that they must be entirely excluded from him, because on all accounts inconsistent with his Nature.

If God be absolutely perfect, every Attribute which we ascribe to him, must be so likewise: His Knowledge must be universal and complete; and his Happiness without any Possibility of Addition. Neither *Faith* nor *Hope* therefore can possibly subsist in God:

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For, as he knows all things, he cannot be said properly to believe any thing; and, as he enjoys all which can be enjoyed, so it is impossible he should hope for more.

These Virtues or Graces indeed, however excellent upon many Accounts they are, must be conceived by us as Virtues or Graces properly *Human*; — suited to our Capacities, and relative to the other Circumstances of our Nature.

If we know not *of ourselves* all things, which yet possibly we are concerned to apprehend, we must inform ourselves by some other Hand; and a Belief, founded on sufficient Motives, will be rational. If our Conduct must be regulated by the Will of God, which, in many Instances, is by us unsearchable, we must learn it from his own Teaching,---whether this Will relate to Precepts which he requires us to obey, or to Doctrines which he inculcates, as having a proper Influence on the Will: And if it shall please the Supreme Being to use Men as his Instruments in the Exercise of extraordinary Powers, they must want the Infusion of Divine Assurance for that Purpose; and this may be called the Faith of Miracles.

So again, with regard to *Hope*: If our
Desires

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Desires of Happiness are unlimited, but our present Enjoyments short, it is natural to look out for more; and the Goodness of the Supreme Being is not a little seen in this, that he affords us the Grounds to hope it; which gracious Vouchsafement not only gratifies our natural Desire, and makes our present Life agreeable, but is attended with this farther Consequence; That it affords us the strongest Motive to Virtue: For this is chiefly influenced by the Rewards of another Life, which are made as it were present to us by Hope.

But, from all these Reflections, it must appear, that *Faith* and *Hope* suppose, and are built upon, the Imperfections of our Nature, whose Defects they are intended to supply; and though they are so far of excellent use both for the Comfort of this Life, and the Attainment of a better, yet must come far short of that *Charity*, which is a Virtue properly Divine; a Virtue, which, subsisting in God himself, is from him derived to Man; and which, at the same time that it employs his Mind, must exalt it.

2. A Second Argument to the same Purpose, shall be this; *Charity* is the End of

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Faith and *Hope*, and that alone whereby they can be of Service to us. The last End indeed of every Dispensation of God towards us, must be the supreme Good of Man,—or the Enjoyment of that Proportion of Happiness, which was designed him at his first Creation: And in this View, as Happiness is our last End, so Charity itself must be considered as a Mean in order to the Attainment of it: But then, in another respect, we may rightly consider it as an End;----as that to which other Graces tend;----as that which they serve to produce and to support; and in this Way to help us on towards the Attainment of our last End itself. Now that *Faith* and *Hope* do so, is the Subject of the present Argument.

I have noted already, that *Faith* and *Hope*, in the Christian Sense of each, must be built on Divine Grounds, or the extraordinary Revelation of Divine Pleasure: But if this Revelation itself be intended for the Improvement of Charity;---to revive in us that Principle which had been almost extinguished by the Fall;---and to render it the governing Movement of our Actions;---then it is certain, that *Faith* and *Hope* must be pointed at the same End. If *the End of the Command-*
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ment [of the revealed Commandment] *be* Charity [1 *Tim.* i. 5.] then *Faith* and *Hope* must be considered as the Means whereby this End must be attained.

Our Blessed Lord indeed assumed our Nature, and made his personal Appearance in the World, to redeem us from Death by the valuable Sacrifice of himself. But even this could not qualify us for the Happiness of another World : Our Nature itself must be reformed before we are capable of those Pleasures, which are suited only to an innocent, or to a reformed, Nature. Now this is done by the Introduction of Charity ; by implanting and cultivating in us an ardent Desire of the Good of others ;---that Principle which renders us most like God himself,----and teaches us to practise every Virtue whereby we may serve ourselves or others.

To be more particular : Faith, as to Doctrines, is an Assent to the Truth of particular Points on the Credit of the Revealer : These were not imparted merely for our Entertainment : Had this been the Design, many things would have been discovered to us in a clearer and fuller Manner : But, as Matters stand at present, enough is revealed to regulate and influence our Conduct, and to pro-

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duce in us those moral Effects it was intended to produce. Were we to enter minutely into the Consideration of the particular Doctrines of our Faith, we should see this justified beyond all possible Question : For there is scarce a single Article but what will appear, either as a Principle from which Charity may be deduced,---or a Means whereby the Practice of it is rendered more easy,--or a Sanction which enforces it on us more strongly.

Hope likewise hath the same Tendency as *Faith* : As it implies a strong Confidence in the Love and Favour of God, it raises our Spirits,---makes us pleased with every thing about us,----and desirous of contributing to the general Welfare, by which we are certain to secure and increase our own : Nay, the very Condition of this Hope is, and must be, Charity : For, is not the thing hoped for a Reward ? And for what is the Reward promised but the Performance of Duty ? And what is that Duty but a Concurrence with the Divine Measures in carrying on the general Good of Mankind ?

The Consequence of such Reflections must be this ; That as *Faith* and *Hope* are both of them Means to produce and increase our *Charity*, so, without attaining this End, they must

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must be entirely useless to us: And, agreeably, our Apostle tells us in this very Chapter, *Though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have Faith so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.---And though I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing* [ver. 2, 3.]

In truth, it may not unreasonably be questioned, whether *Faith* or *Hope*, in the genuine Sense of the Words, can subsist without it: For though there may be some Appearance of these Virtues,---or, if you please, some of those outward Acts, which are the proper Result of *Faith* or *Hope*, may be performed, separate from *Charity*, yet it is not easy to conceive how a Man can have either a right Belief, or a well-grounded Expectation, independent of this Virtue. *Faith*, the Apostle tells us, *worketh by Love* [Gal. v. 6.] without which Effect, we are assured by another sacred Writer, *it is dead being alone* [James ii. 17.] And *Hope* of receiving Good at the Divine Hands, without our doing Good to others, is not strictly *Hope*, but *Presumption*. If this Way of Reasoning be right, we may carry the Matter farther than

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even the Argument before us requires ; and affirm not barely, that *Faith* and *Hope* are useless without *Charity*, but likewise, that they cannot so much as subsist without it : So tender hath God been towards the Whole of Mankind, that, in forming the very Constitution of Things, he hath so ordered it, that we are capable of neither Virtue, nor Grace, nor Happiness, without endeavouring to promote the same in others.

3. I pass on to a Third Argument ; viz. That *Charity* is immediately connected with Happiness ; which cannot be affirmed either of *Faith* or *Hope*.

That both these Graces are greatly conducive to Happiness, in the End, is here supposed ; and that they do, in some Degree, produce it immediately, must be admitted likewise : For *Faith* gives us the Possession of a Truth by Divine Favour ; and *Hope* anticipates, in some measure, the Good we hope for. From each of these Reflections, it is plain, the Mind must raise to itself a proper Entertainment : But then let us consider, that even the present Happiness, resulting from both *Faith* and *Hope*, is founded on their Connexion with something else ;---on their being Principles which lead to, and animate,
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our *Charity*; and without which, *Faith* (if we may be supposed to have it) will but aggravate our Miscarriages, and *Hope* defeat us of the very End it points at.

Indeed, with regard to both, there is something in the very Nature of them which limits, or rather abates, the Happiness they might otherwise produce: For as they are founded on our Imperfection, so likewise the very Matter of them, with respect to us, is limited and imperfect. Thus *Faith* is an Assent to something of itself inevident, and which, in most Cases, we are unable to comprehend, even whilst we believe it; and *Hope* is an Expectation of a future Good, which we desire to enjoy. If the former puts us in Possession of Truth, yet it is a Possession by no means of our own acquiring: It is an imperfect Possession; because by *Faith* we only believe, but in strictness do not know we have it: And since our Capacities are narrow, and inadequate to the Objects of our *Faith*, our Assent must be, in certain respects, indeterminate. The principal Happiness therefore resulting from *Faith*, must be enjoyed hereafter, when this Enjoyment shall supersede this *Faith*. As to *Hope*, it supposes the Absence of the Thing hoped for;

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for ; and in proportion to the apprehended Importance of what a Man expects, so his Desire is increased, and with it the Uneasiness which always accompanies a Desire till gratified. Be it, that this Uneasiness is greatest where the Object of this Desire is improbable ; yet it doth, and must, subsist, in some measure, even where this Gratification is ensured : For since, whatever Good a Man expects hereafter, he wants at present ; this Want must unavoidably carry with it some Degree of Pain. Thus, we see, both *Faith* and *Hope*, though productive of Happiness in the Result, yet are not directly and immediately connected with it.

But, can this be said of *Charity* ? This Virtue is not only connected with our last supreme Good, as the instituted Condition of obtaining it, but of itself produces Happiness as its genuine and natural Effect. The very Constitution of human Nature is such, that the doing good to others gratifies our noblest Appetite : The very worst Men are not able to divest themselves entirely of this Principle : They indulge it towards some favourite Objects at least, and enjoy a particular Pleasure in doing so : Insomuch, that what some Philosophers have said of Virtue in the general,

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is most eminently true of this Virtue ; that without looking farther, it encourages and rewards itself. Experience will shew this : For a Man need only recollect the Condition of his own Mind, upon the Performance of a generous Action, to discern it,

Thus this Matter must appear from Fact, without reasoning at all about it : And yet, if we examine things closely, we may see, that it is impossible to be otherwise ; this Consequence directly arising from the Mind, considered as conscious of its own Pleasures or Pains, and a Witness of the like produced in others : Pleasure, or what is agreeable, we naturally love ; and Pain, or the Disagreeable, we hate : Even to recollect either, when we have no direct Perception of them, will affect us, though more faintly perhaps, and in a less Degree. Let a Person, thus constituted, be Witness to the Enjoyments or Sufferings of another ; this at least must remind him of what hath befallen, or may happen to, himself : He must therefore, in some sense, *feel* it ; and, of course, either enjoy or suffer with him. These Sentiments must be more lively, when he considers himself as having acted toward his Fellow-Creature, either advantageously or otherwise ; and as
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the proper Cause of his Pleasure or Pain. Now such a Sensibility of what happens to another, is the Principle we call *Charity*; which moving toward his Assistance or Relief, must of consequence rejoice him in proportion as it affords him either. In this Way of Thinking, as a Want of Charity must be owing to a Perversion of Nature, so a Want of Happiness must be owing to a Defect of Charity.

4. I am now to observe, Fourthly, That *Charity* is absolutely necessary to Salvation, which neither *Faith* nor *Hope* can be.

In the Argument now before me, I must desire to be understood with Favour: Not as affirming, that *Faith* or *Hope* are entirely needless;----for, I have said already, they are most excellent Virtues or Graces, and of vast Importance in carrying on the Christian Life. I must affirm farther, that, under certain Circumstances, they are highly necessary: In every Christian they must be supposed: His very Religion implies *Faith* as its Ground, and *Hope* as the great Principle to support it. I may go on, and say, that where the proper Reasons of *Faith* and *Hope* are laid before Men, there they must be absolutely necessary; and to reject these Reasons, is

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not only absurd, but impious : Yet, notwithstanding this, we may see, by carrying our Thoughts a little farther, that *Charity* hath an Advantage over *Faith* and *Hope* even on this Head.

For although these Graces are supposed in the Christian, and entirely necessary to Salvation, where the proper Grounds of them are offered ; yet what shall we say of those Cases where God hath not been pleased to afford Men the Reasons either of *Faith* or *Hope* ? These Two Graces are founded in the Revelation of Divine Will. Where no such Revelation therefore hath been vouchsafed, it is impossible there should be either *Faith* or *Hope* ; and the Want of that which is impossible, can never be esteemed criminal. Shall we say then, that all those to whom God hath not vouchsafed a Revelation, are under the unavoidable Sentence of Perdition ? God forbid : The Scripture teaches otherwise, whilst it informs us, that *the Times of Ignorance God winked at* [*Acts* xvii. 30.] And, *when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in it, these, having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves* [*Rom.* ii. 14.] By this shall they be judged, and accordingly either acquitted or condemned.

But

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But though *Faith* and *Hope*, as before represented, may be dispensed with where their proper Grounds are wanting, yet no Dispensation will, in any Case whatsoever, be allowed for the Want of *Charity*: And the Reason is plain: This is a Duty clearly founded in the Nature of Things, and its Obligation discernable by every-one: It arises from a Principle implanted in every Man by God himself: Our First Thoughts approve it,---- and the First Motions of our Minds are towards it: When we act in consequence of this, we are not barely easy, but delighted; and every Recollection of a generous Action, though long since past, is comfortable. Perhaps the inward Disposition towards being pleased with the Happiness of others, and of course towards the promoting it, so far as lies within our Power, is the principal Point which supports our own Happiness, and gives a Relish to all that Good which arises to ourselves. Possessed of this every Man is happy, whilst outward Objects permit this Principle to operate upon him; as, on the contrary, without it no Man can possibly be easy, whatever his Advantages in Life may be: For his own Sourness and Ill-nature must prey upon him, and render his very Enjoyments tasteless.

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less. If this be true, then *Charity* is absolutely necessary to Salvation, not only in a moral Sense, as its Condition, but likewise in a natural, as the *Qualification* which fits and enables us to enjoy it.

I am led by this to the Last Consideration, on which I ground the Excellency of *Charity* above *Faith* and *Hope*; viz. *Charity* shall be our eternal Employment in the other World, whereas *Faith* shall there be lost in Sight, and *Hope* in Enjoyment.

Our Apostle, in this very Chapter, tells us, *Charity never faileth: But we know in part, and we prophecy in part; and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away* [ver. 8, 9.] There needs no great Attention to perceive, that since we believe on Authority, because our own Comprehension of Things is imperfect, therefore, after such an Enlargement of our Views as shall supersede this Authority, *Faith* of course must cease,----and we cannot be then said so properly to believe as to know. So, again: We hope for future Good, because it is future; and there is a well-grounded Prospect of obtaining it: But, when this is once obtained, the Hope of it must entirely vanish; *For, what a Man bath, why doth he yet*

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yet hope for? [Rom. viii. 24.] Now the State of good Men in the other World is such, as will enable *us to know even as also we are known*; and put us in Possession of all those Advantages which Religion proposed, and for which the good Man laboured. Here therefore both *Faith* and *Hope* must end, having once accomplished those Purposes for which they were at first intended.

But it is not so with *Charity*: This Virtue, as being immediately connected with Happiness, must subsist as long as Happiness itself shall subsist; and, as being absolutely necessary to Salvation, not only as a Condition, but a Qualification fitting us to enjoy it, must last as long as Salvation itself shall last; that is, through the whole Extent of our unperishing and endless Being. Should we suppose a Man in the other World, I will not say ill-tempered, but only indifferent to the Concerns of others with whom he associates, his own Happiness would be lost in proportion as the Ground of it is impaired. We find this to be Matter of Fact during the present Life; and the same Cause which produces this Appearance now, must do so for ever. If therefore we are to be happy for ever, we must be charitable likewise.

Not

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Not that this Virtue will then exert itself as it doth now : In the present Life it principally shews itself in Attempts towards removing the Hindrances of Happiness,---or at most in supplying Materials for human Enjoyment : For these there can be no Occasion in the other World : There *God* himself *will be Mens Portion* ; or, to speak more plainly, from him must they derive their Happiness, as from its only proper Author. The Principle therefore before us must then act *inwardly*, by making us partake in that Happiness which others enjoy ;---and *outwardly*, by expressing, in Ways suitable to our State, how much we are delighted with their Happiness. Where this Regard is mutual, each Man will not only encrease his own Enjoyments, but prove the Occasion of heightening those of others ; And in this Way the Principle itself may be eternally strengthening, and the Effect which it produces, be eternally improving.

What a noble Prospect is here opened to us ! We have now in View an Happiness not only eternal in Duration, but which shall be eternally growing ; infomuch, that there are no assignable Degrees of it, to which the good Man may not be sure of attaining here-

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after ; and when these are once attained to, the Prospect before us will be still infinite.— Who would not use his utmost Endeavours in this Life to secure an Interest infinitely improving, and upon that account infinitely valuable ?

Hitherto I have treated of Charity in the general : But the present Occasion calls for a particular Application ; and in prosecuting this Part of my Design, I hope it will appear, that no Branch, no Instance, of this Virtue is of greater Importance than what I have now undertaken to recommend * : And this whether we consider the Interest of the immediate Objects of this Charity, or of the World ; — their temporal or their spiritual Concerns.

It hath been already noted under my First Head, “ that Charity implies such a quick Sense of the Good or Evil which may happen to others, as prompts us to use our best Endeavours to promote and secure the one, and to prevent, or remove, the other.” But what greater Good can we promote in such Objects as these, than that which must influence their right Conduct in future Life ? What greater Evil can we prevent, than that which must

* The Institution of Charity-Schools.

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arise from Ignorance and Vice, which it is the professed Design of the present Institution to remove? In the early Season of Life, whilst Children are as yet innocent and docile, they are capable of being formed to any thing; — to Industry, to Modesty, to Virtue, to Religion; and the present Advantages arising to them from such kind Prepossessions, will be Favour, Success, Satisfaction, Plenty, and every thing else, which a reasonable Person can expect or wish for: On the other hand, by a Neglect of Education, the very Knowledge of Duty will be hid; the Passions will become unruly; and the Conduct, I do not say barely irregular, but monstrous: For want of being inured to Diligence, they will become lazy; Laziness will beget Poverty, --- Poverty Rapine, --- and Rapine will provoke Justice, not to be satisfied but by the Death of the Offender.

Yet the temporal Interests of these Objects, important as they must appear, are little, in Comparison with their spiritual Concerns; for these reach into another Life, and must affect them, not for a short Time, but for ever. The future Consequence of a virtuous and religious Life, must be Happiness beyond our present Conceptions; as the Punish-

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ment of Vice and Impiety must be Misery intolerable. If this be the Case, how are we providing, by the Institution before us, for their greatest and most enduring Interest? since, by training them up to the right Discharge of those Offices whereby present Prosperity may be attained, they are taught how to secure those higher and more valuable Privileges, *the being the Sons and Heirs of God*. These are only Hints of what hath been explained to you, with much greater Advantage, on other such Occasions; and in which I pretend not so much to instruct, as to remind you.

Hitherto the Interests of the immediate Objects of this Charity have been noted: And although these surely must be regarded by every-one who hath either the Faith of a Christian, or the Tenderness of a Man, yet there are still other Considerations in reserve respecting the common Interests and Advantage of Society.

I will not enlarge on the Order and Beauty which the good moral Conduct of its inferior Members must introduce into Society: These are obvious to every serious Considerer;—and with others, to insist on them would be fruitless. But there is one thing which even
such

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such Persons may think themselves concerned to attend to. Supposing the numerous Youth, now educated in the Ways of Diligence and Virtue, had been overlooked ; and, as soon as they should arrive at their full natural Force, be let loose : These, unfurnished with any good Principles whereby their Passions may be controuled, would make dreadful Work amongst the rich Possessions of their Neighbours : What Property, what Life, would be safe on this Foot ; since such Men, ten times more Brutes than the Brutes themselves (because they have a greater Variety of Passions to gratify), would ravage, not only without Remorse, but without End.

If you call for Instances to confirm this, pray consider the present Situation of Things and how unsafe it often proves to pass the Streets even of this well-governed City. Men complain not only of insolent Force, but even of Barbarities heretofore unheard of. It seems, the lower and more wicked Parts of Society are now forming themselves into compacted Bodies,----have reduced the Methods of Force and Rapine, which were heretofore rude and disorderly, into a regular System,---and are proceeding, as Armies

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are wont to do, in the Ways of Terror. The Public is now called upon for Redress,—and such Calls cannot be made in vain. But how much worse would our Circumstances have been, had Six thousand others (for such a Number is charitably educated within and about this City); had these, I say, been let loose, rude, and wicked, and barbarous, as those who have lately infested us! Against such Accessions even a military Force would scarce secure us: For though disciplined Troops, fighting under proper Command, and desirous to maintain their Reputation, will always be an Overmatch for unpractised Forces;—yet what must be the Consequence, where the Enemy, avoiding regular Engagement, shall disperse themselves in their several Retreats? From whence they will issue forth as Occasions offer, and defy a Power which scarce knows where to find them. With the Serious and Good, this Consideration will give additional Weight to moral and religious Motives; and with Persons of another Cast, it may perhaps have some Influence, though every other Motive fails.

One thing remains, which ought not to pass un-noted; because it serves, not barely to justify the Design of this Institution, but

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to recommend it from real Fact and Experience ; I mean, that these Schools in the general are under a just and proper Regulation. In this respect it is perhaps an Advantage, that they are supported by voluntary Contribution : Hence they must be under the constant Eye of Contributors, who have a Right to enquire, and to satisfy themselves about them. In such Circumstances great Abuses cannot easily gain Ground : They will be soon suspected : Suspicion will lead to Discovery,---Discovery to Complaints,---and Complaints to Correction. In some Cases, indeed, the watchful Jealousy of those who are real Friends to this Institution, may lead them to suspect without sufficient Grounds. Advantages may arise from hence ; for it will teach the Directors of these Schools to be perpetually on their Guard : It will produce Enquiry ; and such Enquiry, if things turn out well, must do them Credit.

I am sensible of this long Trespas on your Patience ; and therefore shall close what I have now offered with this single Exhortation ; That as Charity is the most excellent of Virtues, and that before us the most excellent Instance of Charity, so you would not only persevere, but abound, in it : Always
remem-

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remembering, that whatever you expend this Way is a Treasure laid up in Heaven; what will not only secure, but heighten, the Reward to be reaped hereafter, when your just and merciful Judge, having approved your Conduct, shall *bid you enter into your Master's Joy.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
&c. Amen.



The END of the FIRST VOLUME.

